The Unsettled Subject:

Territory and Ambivalence

in the post-Photoconceptual Landscape

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Abstract

This thesis mobilizes a psychoanalytically-informed conception of landscape photography to inform a close semiotic reading of contemporary landscape photographic works produced in the years immediately surrounding the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics by three British Columbia-based artists. These works, termed "post-photoconceptual," serve to destabilize the spectatorial positions and mechanisms of subjectification delineated by historical forms of landscape associated with the imperial visual regimes European modernity and the settling of Canada, in turn provoking reflection on the unstable or "unsettled" territorial status of British Columbia's post-imperial state. As they apprehend "unresolved ambivalence" as a formal operation of landscape photography, the works of this study take as a starting place the task of bringing into visibility the role of representation in failing to rectify the internal contradictions of place and belonging of the landscape photograph, in turn suspending spectatorial possibilities for visual, territorial, and psychic mastery.

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INTRODUCTION

> Landscape might be seen [...] as something like the 'dreamwork' of imperialism, unfolding its own movement in time and space from a central point of origin and folding back on itself to disclose both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance.[1]
>
> -W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape"

> The aura of the photographed landscape—the impression of proximity, familiarity, and relevance in a possibly quite-distant scene—seems to tap into a memory we did not know existed, a counterpart in ourselves we may have felt but did not know. Conceptually and visually, we are subjected to something we recognize as crucially important, though in the end it eludes us.[2]
>
> -Ulrich Baer, "To Give Memory a Place: Contemporary Holocaust Photography and the Landscape Tradition"

In his introductory essay to the anthology *Landscape and Power*, W. J. T. Mitchell situates landscape as a "symbolic form"[3] of political consequence. Not simply an art historical genre, nor a set of topographical features inherent within land, Mitchell situates landscape in the context of its emergence within European modernity as a cultural narrative and colonial force which circulates mythically and socially to construct the notion of inhabited indigenous territories as *terra nullius* and available for imperial claim. Landscape functions as the ideological seizure of space, serving to inscribe territory within the logic of imperial prospect,

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[1] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power* (2nd Edition) [Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 10.
[2] Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005): 79.
[3] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 14.

and at once forming the nostalgic narrative of nature at its imperial centre. Landscape functions as the "dreamwork of imperialism," as a "poetic" form of property of material consequence.[4]

Conceiving of landscape as a "dreamwork"—rather than solely a narrative, an ideological apparatus, or a cultural symbol—Mitchell proposes an affinity between landscape and psychic space. Psychoanalysis has long suggested the dream to be the site of an unresolved conflict, and as Mitchell's passage quoted above suggests, in the case of the "dreamwork" of imperialism, tension and dissonance inform the manner in which landscape can foreclose access to material control over territory. A liminal, unresolved remainder haunts the landscape's symbolic form, with "fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance;"[5] with the threatening prospect of its own undoing and fragility. No instance of landscape as a mechanism of cultural and imperial power can ever construct a wholly and seamlessly "utopian" fantasy of possession of land, rather, like any dream, its narrative is invested with contradictions that hover at its periphery.

Yet this lack of resolution historically embedded within landscape as an imperial "dreamwork" also can be conceived at the level of subjectification in the instance of encounter with the landscape photograph. In conjunction with Mitchell's insights, Ulrich Baer's above quoted passage suggests a dual movement for the operations of landscape. Dissonance and irresolution take place not only within the imperial function of landscape as an ideological justification for territorial occupation, but also as a representational form landscape constructs psychic dissonance with respect to a viewer's aesthetic encounter. The formal limits of the landscape photograph--the aspects of experience that photography cannot rationalize and the

[4] Ibid, 14.
[5] Ibid, 10.

expanses of territory that remain unconquerable through the act of representation--haunt the medium's possibilities for spectatorial engagement. The photographed landscape bears its own set of contradictions: it is at once "proximal" as it is "distant," known and "not [known];" it exposes something that can be "[recognized]" but not understood, whose significance remains obscured.[6] Baer proposes that the landscape's formal operations produce this gap between context, place, and experience:

> The tradition of landscape art [...] seems to situate viewers against their will, by imbuing a scene with auratic significance but without necessarily linking this sense of familiarity to any remembered past. In this tradition, then, a site's apparent meaningfulness only appears to emanate from the setting; in fact, that impression really results from the viewing subject's position [...]—thus not from the setting but from the viewing self.[7]

In Baer's formulation, the photographed landscape figures an intervention into the access to our own memories and personal history, resting upon an epistemological threshold between graspable awareness and the depths of unconscious experience. While Baer writes in the context of photography and trauma,[8] his insights here into landscape and the photographed landscape in particular suggest an unresolved space conditioned by subjective encounter. The landscape structurally demands implications for the subjectification of the "viewing self" and their spectatorial positioning, posing a gap between the familiarity of "auratic significance" and the distance of a past that remains unremembered. Landscape poses an epistemological lacuna that exceeds attempts at reconciliation, formally staging the contradictory possibility of memory at once recognized, at once unintelligible.

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[6] Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 79.
[7] Ibid, 7.
[8] Specifically, in this text Baer proposes a structural analogy between the placement of the viewer within the landscape and the operations of trauma in psychic space. While for my purposes I do not focus on trauma specifically, I adapt Baer's propositions of landscape as formally constitutive of a rupture or disjunct in psychic experience to consider unresolved spaces of ambivalence in the territorial context of imperialism.

Baer and Mitchell's passages brought together propose operations both structural and historical. They gesture towards unresolved histories both political and personal, indications of failure in attempts at mastery over territorial and psychic space. What does it mean to bring these two implications together in ways that can provoke reflection on the landscape form as well as the possibilities of photographic art in thinking landscape at the present moment? What are the ways a landscape photograph can conjure an elusive ambivalence by virtue of the experience of photographic encounter as well as the history of place? What modes of spectatorial identification and subjectification might be provoked in the event of such forms of ambivalence and irresolution?

In this thesis I consider contemporary photographic works that speculate upon landscape as a structural site of psychic dissonance, as well as intervene in representations of landscape as an imperial discourse. Each in heavy dialogue with different historic forms of imperial landscapes—the pastoral tradition, settler territorial photography, and Canadian modernism respectively—Jin-me Yoon's *This time being* (2013), Raymond Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* (2012), and Christos Dikeakos' *Scotch Broom* (2006-2009) constitute informed engagements with landscape as an art historical genre and as a "symbolic form" of cultural and political consequence.[9] They also mark practices following from the tradition of photoconceptualism of attending to the photographic form, each commenting on the role of the photographic apparatus in constructing the landscape imaginary of modernity as well as contemporary British Columbia and Canada. Attending to the notoriously photogenic territories of British Columbia that have been excessively photographed—conceptually, touristically, archivally—these works apprehend

[9] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 8.

"unresolved ambivalence" as a formal operation of landscape photography, bringing into visibility the role of representation in failing to rectify or "naturalize" the internal contradictions of place, belonging, and mourning of the landscape photograph, in turn suspending spectatorial possibilities for visual, territorial, and psychic mastery. As they destabilize and denaturalize the spectatorial positions delineated by historical forms of landscape associated with the imperial visual regimes European modernity and the settling of Canada, these photographs in turn provoke reflection on the unstable or "unsettled" territorial status of British Columbia's post-imperial state and the "unsettling" ambivalence that ground its own imperial "dreamwork."

LANDSCAPE AS POWER

In "Imperial Landscape," Mitchell delineates three commonly accepted understandings of landscape:

> (1) that it is, in its "pure" form, a western European and modern phenomenon; (2) that it emerges in the seventeenth century and reaches its peak in the nineteenth century; (3) that it is originally and centrally constituted as a genre of painting associated with a new way of seeing.[10]

While the term "landscape" first appeared in relation to pastoral Dutch landscape painting in the 16th-century[11] and originally referred to the pictorial representation of countryside, the meaning of the English word would later come to refer to supposedly inherent qualities or features of aesthetic representability.[12] Landscape was not simply an artistic object, but a mode of seeing

[10] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 7.
[11] Douglas Nickel, "Photography, Perception, and the Landscape," in Deborah Bright [Ed.] *America in View: Landscape Photography 1865 to Now* (Providence: Rhode Island School of Design, 2013): 15-29.
[12] Rod Giblett and Jula Tolonen, *Photography and Landscape* (Wilmington, NC: Intellect Ltd, 2012):

already produced by the visuality of topography. Even as a depiction, a landscape image was considered to be "a *natural* representation of a natural scene," whose status as a constructed image was partially absolved by way of its own referential content.[13]

Yet as Mitchell further suggests, this purely aesthetic definition fails to accommodate for the productive function of landscape within the "dreamwork" of European imperialism. The claim to naturalness of landscape similarly informs the logic of its function as a visual and spatial correlate to colonial expansion. The characteristics of the classical post-Renaissance narrative of landscape, Mitchell continues,

> are tailor made for the discourse of imperialism which conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of "culture" and "civilization" into a "natural" space in a progress that is itself narrated as "natural."[14]

The emergence of the modern European imperialist state which self-legislates its own existence through a temporal conception of inevitable progress serves as analogue to landscape's internal logic by visually constructing territory as a prospect of domination. Landscape, serving as a spatial correlate for the temporal conception of imperialist "progress," "stages history"[15] while incorporating the act of this staging within its own claim to the natural.

While the European landscape tradition originated with pastoral imagery depicting harmonious images of human presence and industrial development with natural scenery, in the

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56. Nickel (2013) further discusses how the 18th-century British writer Rev. William Gilpin suggests this characterization of landscape as a pictorial object with his suggestion that travellers bring a pocket mirror with them while exploring the countryside, to be held with the users with their back turned to a visually pleasing setting as a measure to verify its ability to perform as an image.

[13] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 15.

[14] Ibid, 17.

[15] Jonathan Bordo, "Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness," in W. J. T. Mitchell [Ed.] *Landscape and Power* (2nd Edition) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 297.

Canadian context representations of sublime wilderness with an absence of human presence have figured most prominently within the nationalist landscape imaginary. Summarized by their self-proclaimed maxim that "[t]he great purpose of landscape art is to make us at home in our own country,"[16] the Group of Seven are often noted for their role in the construction of landscape representation in Canada.[17] As Jonathan Bordo argues, the Group, exemplified by paintings such as Lawren S. Harris' *Maligne Lake, Jasper Park* (1924), serve to erase indigenous presence from the land through the construction of unpopulated expanses of territory.[18] As Eva Mackey further argues, the Canadian wilderness landscape tradition was distinct from European pastoral and Romantic landscape because it justified settler occupation of territory not by picturing territory as inviting, but rather by framing the natural world as ominous, uncontrollable, and resolutely devoid of human presence.[19] Such images present Canadian territory as impenetrable and unwelcoming, yet at once dispossessed of human history and thus outside of time and in turn available for the impartation of civilization facilitated through imperial conquest.

While the erasure of Aboriginal presence from the land in Group of Seven paintings marks perhaps the most culturally resonant form of imperial landscape in the Canadian context, in British Columbia the imperial "dreamwork" of landscape at the beginning of the 20th-century made use of an opposed set of strategies to justify settler presence. The post-Impressionist and Surrealist-influenced landscapes of celebrated painters Emily Carr and Jack Shadbolt contain marks of indigenous presence through objects such as totem poles and longhouses, and

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[16] Group of Seven quoted in John O'Brian and Peter White, *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007): back cover.
[17] See Ibid; Bordo, "Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness;" and Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2002).
[18] Bordo, "Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness."
[19] Mackey, *House of Difference*, 56-58.

sometimes direct representations of resource extraction and other destructive effects of colonial presence. Yet, as "empathy with the natives" in settler depictions such as Carr's and Shadbolt's "depends on [the artist's] distance from them," the "native as a symbol of land" in such works can be argued to be "purely a white projection," rather than a rejection of colonial cultural imposition.[20] Such artists attribute "nativeness" to territory in a manner detached from the specificity of historical and cultural context[21] which, in a different manner than the Group of Seven paintings, nonetheless reconcile settler anxieties and forms of guilt that justify colonial entitlement.[22]

In the British Columbian context, the power of landscape imagery has a particular resonance, as a territory where "the visual often overwhelms" and "the importance of images cannot be underestimated."[23] Yet the excessive visuality of British Columbia's "sea of mountains"[24] has always needed to negotiate, like any form of landscape, its own remnants of "unsuppressed resistance." Specifically in British Columbia, this tension is marked by the unique colonial history of the province, where no official treaties were signed to cede the land to the Canadian state until the year 2000 and the majority of indigenous bands remain excluded

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[20] Robert Linsley, "Painting and the Social History of British Columbia," in Stan Douglas [Ed.] *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991): 232.
[21] Linsley, "Painting and the Social History of British Columbia," 231.
[22] For this discussion see also Gerta Moray, "Emily Carr and the Traffic in Native Images," in Bruce Grenville and Scott R. Steedman [Eds.] *Visions of British Columbia: A Landscape Manual* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010).
[23] Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007): 3.
[24] Ibid, 3.

from the treaty process entirely to this day.[25] A violent history of settlement haunts the image of the province variously nicknamed the "beautiful" and the "natural" of the Canadian imaginary.[26]

ENVISIONING MODERNITY

The imperial context of the historical emergence of landscape also coincides with a particular set of circumstances for visual cultures through the rise of photography along with discursive sets of social values, cultural formations, and processes of subjectification associated with European modernity. Landscape, "[reaching] its peak in the nineteenth century,"[27] emerged within a broader context of the continuation of the Romanticist conception of "Nature" and in conjunction with new regimes of visuality.[28] The growth of European cities due to the Industrial Revolution led to health problems and overcrowding in urban centres, and in turn a growing reverence for natural spaces outside of the city, which increasingly served to represent health, wealth, and leisure.[29] The European extensions of global imperial pursuit found motivation and justification by means of temporal logics of "progress" associated with industrialization and technological and cultural developments. The continued resonance of the Romanticist eighteenth

[25] The Nisga'a Treaty, completed in 2000 after a 40-year process, marks the first modern day treaty in British Columbia. The only preceding treaty was Treaty 8 signed in 1899, which accounted for only a small amount of territory in the Northeastern corner of the province. See Richard Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

[26] "Beautiful British Columbia" and "Super, Natural British Columbia" mark two provincially popularized nicknames, appearing on license plates and tourism brochures. See Destination B.C. Corp. "Super Natural British Columbia Canada," published 2015, retrieved July 29, 2015 at http://www.hellobc.com/

[27] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 7.

[28] As Mitchell further suggests, "the discourse of landscape is a crucial means for enlisting "Nature" in the legitimation of modernity." Ibid, 13.

[29] Nickel, "Photography, Perception, Landscape."

century divide between "Man" and "Nature" became further informed by the rise of positivist science, obscuring the distinction between scientific and artistic means of discovery.[30]

Photography played a central role in this convergence between technological and scientific developments and visual culture. Literally translated as "sun writing," photography was narrativized in the nineteenth century as not an art form but a technical and objective mode of the reproduction of a concretely available visual reality. Upon the invention of the daguerreotype, Daguerre famously proclaimed:

> the DAGUERREOTYPE is not merely an instrument which serves to draw Nature; on the contrary it is a chemical and physical process which gives her the power to reproduce herself.[31]

Unlike the subjective act of "drawing," in which human interpretation could influence the outcome of a depiction, photography was understood as a scientific facilitator for the faithful and transparent exposure of "Nature" and reality. Yet in a contradictory gesture, this "reality" was necessarily radically abstracted by way of technological apparatuses in order to be measured as objectively accurate.[32]

Indeed, as Jonathan Crary argues, central to the conditions of photography's invention was the growing valuation of vision as a means of empirical inquiry:

> Rather than stressing the separation between art and science in the nineteenth century, it is important to see how they were both part of a single interlocking field of knowledge and practice. The same knowledge that allowed the increasing rationalization and control of the human subject in terms of new institutional and economic requirements was also a condition for new experiments in visual representation. Thus I want to delineate an observing subject who was both a product of and at the same time constitutive of modernity in the nineteenth century. Very generally, what happens to the observer in the

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Daguerre quoted in Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997): 66.

[32] See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

> nineteenth century is a process of modernization; he or she is made adequate to a constellation of new events, forces, and institutions that together are loosely and perhaps tautologically definable as "modernity."[33]

Not only was truth something available to be found by the act of looking, but this looking or "observing" subject was produced by "certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjectification" by means of an increasing authority of visual objects.[34] The neoclassical perspectival conventions of Western art history of a detached viewer, structured by a symmetrical relation to viewpoint and vanishing point, could find new structural legitimation within new visual technologies under the lens of scientific inquiry which claimed to rectify the subjective bias of the eye. The viewer—this "observing subject" of modernity—was capable of enacting through the realm of sight the values of autonomy, wholeness, and individuality; and technological apparatuses, exemplified by the camera but also including other optical inventions, were seen as capable of reconciling through sight the ambiguities of experience.

Yet in the 19th-century, as Crary further argues, photography was marked by a contradictory relation to objective empiricism, where the photographic camera as a tool for scientific enquiry was seen as permitting access to "a vision that did not represent or refer to objects in the world" yet was nonetheless "directed toward the mechanization and formalization of vision."[35] The photographic camera marked a rupture in the conception of visual experience, proposing a "violent decentering of the place of mastery in which since the Renaissance the look had come to reign."[36] The "geometral" optical regime of the 18th-century was replaced by a

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[33] Ibid, 9.
[34] Ibid, 5.
[35] Ibid, 141.
[36] Jean-Louis Comolli quoted in Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996): 126.

"physiological"[37] model, whereby vision marks the "object rather than the subject of optical knowledge."[38] Unlike the regime of the camera obscura where the visual world can be seen as resolutely external, the viewer is now considered to be themselves physically and sensorially immersed in the production of vision, and the subject her/himself is capable of being rationalized, individualized, and made "manageable."[39]

For the purposes of the consideration of the emergence of landscape, this conception of vision as dispersed and autonomously contained by the individual human subject suggests a number of implications. The power of seeing by way of an autonomous self supports the notion of territory as something further "manageable" and containable with the application of the appropriate technologies. As Joel Synder writes in a discussion of settler territorial photography and the birth of the geological survey,

> The assumption is that photographs stand in a special relation to vision, but vision detached from any particular viewer. It is a distributed vision, one that transcends individual subjectivity and, accordingly, individual interest. These photographs are to be understood as disinterested reports. Thus the photographer's achievement does not involve the sensitivity of the artist's eye or the use of an artist's imagination or the intelligent choice of the right depictive conventions; rather, it rests on the technical capacity to record a sight that is understood to be a natural image of nature.[40]

As this passage suggests, 19th-century territorial photography suggests new implications for the conception of landscape. The landscape photograph is understood not as capturing the artful and imaginative depiction of sublime grandiosity or pastoral harmony of landscape painting, rather the self-evidentiary status of the photograph[41] suggests that such qualities may be inherently

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[37] Ibid, 128.
[38] Ibid, 129.
[39] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 15.
[40] Joel Snyder, "Territorial Photography," in W. J. T. Mitchell [Ed.] *Landscape and Power* (2nd Edition) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 183.
[41] As Allan Sekula writes, "Nothing could be more *natural* than a newspaper photo, or a man pulling a snapshot from his wallet and saying, 'This is my dog'." Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," 86.

within terrain. The photograph, as a "disinterested" report and an objective record, offers "Nature" as constructed by the landscape as scientific rather than mythic material, resolutely exterior to cultural construction. Embroiled in the visual regimes of 19th-century Europe, photography and landscape hold formal affinities to the mechanisms of other inventions of modernity—global imperialism, the concept of "Nature" as opposed to "civilization"—by way of configuring a claim to naturalness while at once attempting to conceal and naturalize the artifice of this very claim.

THE HOLE IN THE LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPH

As Crary further argues, the technological conception of visuality coincident with the invention of the photograph, while contributing to the rationalization of the subject, also marks the historical emergence of an uncertain and unstable conception of subjectivity. As "vision is no longer subordinated to an exterior image of the true or right,"[42] the objective status of the photograph encounters the limits of what it fails to explain. The invention of photography marks the beginning of a crisis of the conception of subjectivity in relation to vision.

Enriching Crary's argument, Kaja Silverman proposes that in this consideration of vision and modernity, Lacanian psychoanalysis serves to consider structural and transhistorical aspects of this sense of the rupture of subjectivity and of the instability of vision.[43] Against a conception of visuality where vision and its corresponding technologies mark the access to spatial and epistemological security, Lacan's conception of the Gaze--as something fundamentally social

[42] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer,* 138.
[43] Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World.*

and external--suggests that the act of looking attests rather to the subject's own "failure" and "blindness" over the access and control over psychic life.[44] Unconscious experience is continually kept afar by virtue of the Real--the domain of experience that can never be truly experienced, the radically untranslatable content of reality that cannot be consciously grasped or made legible because it resists symbolization. By virtue of the fact that one can never see oneself from where one is seen by others, and the fact that the content at which one looks is partly outside of one's control (best exemplified, in Lacan's favoured example, of the anamorphic effect of visual distortion in Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors*), a "hole" always interrupts one's potential for a fully coherent sense of sight.[45] The Lacanian conception of the Gaze, as Rosalind Krauss further describes, breaks the "geometral" conception of perspective whereby "subject and object [...] [are] put into reciprocity as two poles of unification" associated with Western art history and the Cartesian subject, rather provoking "the realization of a point of view that is withheld."[46] The subject's own immersive inclusion in the production of the image remains inaccessible to them, their projections and modes of symbolization formed through personal history are inseparable from unconscious mechanisms of interpretation of visual experience. This lack of access to experience generates a "split *within* the subject" as well as "*between* subjects": vision, rather than foster self-knowledge, attests to the missing aspect of experience that can never be known, to invisibility and fragmentation.[47] The Real marks this irreconcilable split, the process of translation that must occur by way of the

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[44] Peggy Phelan, "Broken Symmetries," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (NY: Routledge, 1993): 3.

[45] "Freud's mapping of the unconscious, as Lacan consistently insisted, makes the Real forever impossible to realize." Ibid, 3.

[46] Rosalind Krauss, "'Informe' Without Conclusion," in *October*, Vol. 78, (Autumn, 1996): 96.

[47] Phelan, "Broken Symmetries," 21.

Symbolic in order to make sense of our experience, whereby "full Being" is but a fantasy "forever impossible to realize" within conscious life,[48] and barriers to self knowledge, taking place variously as unresolved memory, fill in the missing contents of vision and conscious experience.

The Lacanian conception of the Gaze serves to give formal, transhistorical context to the consideration of photographic landscape and suggests psychic investments for the imperial "dreamwork" of landscape imagined by Mitchell. The semiotic basis of photography, marked by the disjuncture between referential content and explanatory context, produces a "gap" of epistemological uncertainty structurally contiguous with the structure of the Gaze. Both photography and the Gaze break with a geometral mode of perception--the photographic camera with perception being supplanted into the physiology of the photographer, and the Gaze with, as Krauss suggests, "subject and object [...] [being] put into reciprocity as two poles of unification." [49] The Gaze suggests content for the material that "eludes" the viewer in Baer's conception of the photographed landscape as the realm of unconscious experience. The photograph stages the failure of the Gaze the subject her/himself confronts: the inability to secure knowledge by way of empirical inquiry.

A Lacanian reading further informs a reading of landscape as an imperial form. Mitchell's proposition of imperial landscape as the "desire for [the] certificate of the Real," suggests that landscape confronts a *lack* of unmediated access: pure "land" cannot be conceptualized in a form outside of the interference of cultural narratives.[50] Mitchell's

[48] Phelan, "Broken Symmetries," 3.
[49] Krauss, "'Informe' Without Conclusion," 96.
[50] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 15.

conceptualization of landscape also permits that this lack or impotence of landscape can be understood culturally in the context of European modernity as its own form of unresolved psychic material or what Freud would call melancholia.[51] The emergence of landscape painting with European modernity coincides with loss: the loss of agricultural work upon the land with the rise of the industrial city in Europe, of an Arcadian pastoral ideal, of a notion of "Nature" preserved from its post-Enlightenment conceptualization. The earliest and most idealized landscape in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Garden of Eden, is narrativized as the exemplary instance of "full Being" and harmonious immersion within a land distilled from "landscape." While psychoanalysis traditionally forwards that the content of the Real is the trauma of the loss of the "state of nature" of perceived physical congruence with the Mother, in the sense of loss in the Edenic context--which has similar resonance in European nostalgic landscapes that serve to render sentimental "a time when metropolitan cultures could imagine their destiny in an unbounded "prospect" of endless appropriation and conquest"[52]—it can be aptly mobilized to situate the narrative of a crisis of belonging specifically linked to place, grieving a home qualified by unrivaled acceptance.[53] Lacan's statement that "the Real is impossible" can be alternately figured: harmonious, seamless origin—land divorced from myth and modes of symbolization--remains beyond reach.[54] The absence structured into imperial landscape, the

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[51] Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning, and Melancholia* (London: Penguin Modern Classics: 2005).

[52] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 20.

[53] Nickel, "Photography, Perception, and the Landscape."

[54] And yet for the post-imperial migrant or indigenous subject, landscape can serve to signify a very different sense of mourning: that of the literal loss of land and livelihood, of displacement from place. In certain dominant racist formulations, the indigenous subject themselves is associated with "land," "full Being" and "state of nature" configured by this Real of landscape, whose obliteration is mourned by the settler in the very act of its occurrence. See Ronato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," in Ronato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989): 68-87.

displaced memory of modernity, is the act of displacement of territory underwritten into the harmonious notion of "Nature."

This psychoanalytic conception of failed mastery of vision in the context of the imperial "dreamwork" of landscape marks a starting place to inform my reading of the landscape photographic works under consideration in this study. Jin-me Yoon's *This time being* (2013), Raymond Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* (2012), and Christos Dikeakos' *Scotch Broom* (2006-2009) construct photographic landscapes that invest in these tensions and maintain their irresolution for the context of encounter. These works mobilize structural tensions in conjunction with reference to particular historical contexts, depriving the viewer of a linear experience of the "cut" of reality performed by the photographic camera,[55] or confronting them with elements incongruent to the logic of the picture within art historical conventions. Informed by conceptual photographic traditions concerned with provoking the limits of representation and problematizing the roles of spectator and photographer, the works of this study gesture towards what can be conceived of as ruptures to an imperial Gaze, bringing into visibility the role of representation in failing to reconcile the internal contradictions of the landscape photograph between reality and Real, land and landscape, "naturalness" and mediation. The artists of my study use specific aesthetic techniques such as the placement of objects, the placement of the viewer, and photographic exposure which lend reflection upon the perspectival "settling" techniques of the practices of landscape and visuality of European modernity, suspending the possibility of visual, territorial, and psychic mastery for the viewer. On a perceptual level, these photographs respectively attend to different narratives historically associated with the landscape genre--objectivity,

[55] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer,* 34.

sentimentality, individuality, and the sublime--intervening in the internal tensions within each. They provoke the possibility that the incommunicable excesses of the unconscious may become exposed, that a hint of a fragment of the Real of "unsuppressed resistance" of territorial occupation may forcefully slip into public life.[56]

The resistance of these images to visual mastery has particular implications for their engagement with the imperial territorial mastery invoked by landscape genre. The works of this study emphasize that the landscape photograph remains haunted by the suspicion of modernity's failed dream of a coherent and tangible concept of "Nature." These works actively refuse to resolve the contradictions of the binaries of modernity, and in doing so, maintain them openly exposed. They gesture towards a movement of displacement at the level of the territorial and the psychic, suggesting forms of knowledge and remembrance loaded with affect and yet to be resolved. For these purposes I do not wish to propose that these two operations of territorial and psychic space are strictly analogous, but rather suggest that they offer a set of converging points of inquiry within a particular ideological and political moment of contested territory. These works indicate points of rupture in the possibility of the form to perform as imperial landscapes as they at once directly deprive the viewer of certainty with elusive elements, as Baer suggests, "[bypassing] painstaking attempts at contextualization"[57] in favour of its rejection. I take this double movement as a point of departure in my consideration of these works and as their prime organizing feature.

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[56] I am suggesting here a relationship of comparison between the Lacanian Real and the unacknowledged reality of the violence of colonial dispossession by the State. While the "unsettling" functions of each of these operate differently (namely, the former is a proposed epistemological and ontological category, the latter is a conglomeration of historical events), it is less a precise analogy that I am interested in so much as a reading strategy that I maintain over the course of the thesis of attending to points of tension between psychic and territorial space within the photographic landscape.

[57] Ibid, 2.

B.C. LANDSCAPE IN TRANSITION: THE LATE 2000s AND THE POST-PHOTOCONCEPTUAL?

The contemporary photographic works I discuss here are also situated within traditions of conceptual photography in the second half of the 20th-century. These works emerge out of a long history of photographic landscape works in British Columbia concerned with attending to the gaze and the photographic production of the spectatorial subject. In the late 1960s in conversation with other conceptual photographic, sculptural, and installation practices emerging around the same time, such as the land art practices of Robert Smithson and the New Topographics photography movement in the United States, a loosely defined group of artists began to produce theoretically-informed photographic work. Jeff Wall's *Landscape Manual* (1969) and the work of N.E. Thing Co. are generally cited as initiating what would come to be termed photoconceptualism or the Vancouver School, a movement concerned with "a distrust of the image, a disidentification with being a photographer" as well as the aesthetic of urban and suburban post-industrial space.[58]

The rise of these art historical, aesthetic, and political dedications in Vancouver can be attributed to a diverse set of historical factors. Within a context of shifts in the city leading up to Expo 86 coinciding with growing dissatisfactions with the local abstract modernist painting dominant at the time, as well as avant-garde support from significant art institutions, "in Vancouver counter-tradition became the next logical step in a continuous tradition of the modern

[58] Clint Burnham, "14 Reasons for Photoconceptualism," in *West Coast Line* 47 (Fall 2005): 103, 61.

pictorial form" as opposed to "in other cities [where] conceptualism became the basis of further deconstruction."[59] Perhaps best exemplified in instances like Wall's Manet-inspired portrait in *Picture for Women* (1979), a dedication to critical engagement with pictorial conventions of art history characterized Vancouver's early contributions to conceptual photography. This aesthetic development can also be attributed to the city's geographical location. Located on the West Coast far from other Canadian urban centres, Vancouver's isolation has been regarded as contributing to its sense of artistic autonomy.[60]

Such factors are also involved with informing the counter-hegemonic sensibility attributed to Vancouver art and the emergence of photoconceptualism. Burnham further argues that the unique topographical features of Vancouver, what with a "radical juxtaposition of [...] landscape that results in mountains and slums [...] in the same frame or picture,"[61] proved a particular proclivity for terrain dense with politicized connotations. Prominent photographer Jeff Wall was originally associated with Leftist politics even amidst his growing commercial success throughout the 1980s, stating an interest in "a whole political culture" and "not just an art movement."[62] Much of these works involved explicit engagements with and subversions of traditional art history, including the particular legacy of Canadian landscape painting. The counter-hegemonic status attributed to the movement is associated with these interventions, inspired by "the globalization of radical politics"[63] present in the city. Burnham notes that the subversion "*from within*"[64] of Vancouver art institutions, the "class fractiousness of Vancouver"

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[59] Sharla Sava, "Cinematic Pictures: The Legacy of the Vancouver Counter-Tradition," in O'Brien, Melanie [Ed.] *Vancouver Art & Economies* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007): 61.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Burnham, "14 Reasons for Photoconceptualism," 103, 63.
[62] Sava, "Cinematic Pictures," 55.
[63] Burnham, "14 Reasons for Photoconceptualism," 63.
[64] Ibid, 64. Italics in original.

[65] of the division between the East and West sides of the city as other factors which led to this movement "which dealt with the commodification of nature as well as urbanization as a form of modernization."[66]

While many of the aesthetic concerns of the early Vancouver School can be discerned as continuing into the present day, the context of contemporary photographic art in Vancouver in the late 2000s involves a different set of social and art historical concerns than those present in the 1970s. While photoconceptualism always had institutional allegiances with the university and the internationalization of Vancouver art had been taking place since the 1980s, the late 2000s mark a new representative moment for nationalist landscape practices, as critique was further incorporated in Vancouver and British Columbia's own self-imaging. On January 23, 2010, a Winter Olympics-funded exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery titled *Visions of British Columbia: A Landscape Manual* made use of the title of Jeff Wall's 1970 critical and facetious work to claim that a "quintessential" British Columbia was "revealed" through the work of contemporary B.C. artists.[67] Works of photoconceptualists, indigenous, and migrant artists, perhaps once regarded as distinctly counter-hegemonic, were in this instance official state-sanctioned representations. Along with the *Visions of British Columbia* exhibition, the installation of Stan Douglas' *Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971* in the newly renovated Woodwards complex on January 15, 2010 also marks a significant moment of the incorporation of critical photographic art within the city's self-image. In a dramatic form of irony, the photograph showing a police intervention in the 1971 Gastown riots was installed to be visible

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid, 59.
[67] Bruce Grenville and Scott R. Steedman, [Eds.] *Visions of British Columbia: A Landscape Manual* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010): back cover.

inside and out of a building which had seen the violent eviction of activists squatting in the building of a social housing protest only a few years earlier. The history of Vancouver photoconceptualism, a movement coming out of "the globalization of radical politics" and "the strong presence [...] of a left culture"[68] in the city, was in a dramatically symbolic instance allied with capitalist development and economic links to tar sands development of the controversial Woodwards complex,[69] attributed to the city's self-narrative as progressive, multicultural, and inclusive.

Another example of the institutionalization of photoconceptualist works and landscapes in particular can be seen in an article published in *B.C. Business* on December 1, 2010 on private gallerist Catriona Jeffries. Hailing the dealer as "Vancouver's Contemporary Art Queen," the article notes Jeffries' mission "to find the young B.C. artists who will pick up where Carr and Shadbolt left off." Speaking to the work of one of her artists, in a description that loosely traces the movement from the nationalist modernist painting of the early twentieth century to contemporary photoconceptualist work, she specifically indicates an interest in critical landscape work and the landscape as an imperial and symbolic construction:

> There is the idea of landscape and the idea of this landscape that gets punctured, a tradition of landscape within this country [...] Kevin [Schmidt] provided a next place of confusion and puncture within a historical build-up of what landscape might represent.[70]

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[68] Burnham, "14 Reasons for Photoconceptualism," 62-63.

[69] See Kevin Harding, "We Don't Want Your Dirty Gold: Corporate Donations and the University," published January 31, 2013, and retrieved July 29, 2015 from http://politicsrespun.org/2013/01/we-dont-want-your-dirty-gold-corporate-donations-and-the-university/#sthash.ssCHmSmc.dpbs, and Isaac Oomen, "The Cornerstone of Gentrification in the Downtown Eastside." Published October 3, 2012, retrieved July 29, 2015 from The Dominion website: http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/4630

[70] Catriona Jeffries quoted in Frances Bula, "Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver's Contemporary Art Queen," retrieved July 29, 2015 from BC Business website: http://www.bcbusiness.ca/people/catriona-jeffries-vancouvers-contemporary-art-queen

The article further points to the commodification of the artists' processes, where Jeffries involves her artists in "an intense and lengthy nurturing process that spans years" by "[communicating] extensively with [them] as they're in the process of developing an idea [...] after she has spent a year or two assessing their work before deciding whether to take them on and more months or years helping them develop."[71] Based on Jeffries' international clientele, artists reflecting upon the monotony of urban development are being sold to real estate developers, others critiquing resource extraction are being bought by executives from banks involved in funding the tar sands. [72] The counter-hegemonic sensibility of the artists or the art works must be conceived within a complex set of material factors with direct implications for the consequences of occupation of British Columbian territory in the years surrounding the 2010 Winter Olympics. Critical forms of representation within Vancouver photographic art, at an intersection with accelerated processes of gentrification, real estate speculation, and ongoing neocolonial practices of resource exploitation, find themselves in a liminal space with regards to British Columbia's own imperial "dreamwork."

For the context of their production in the late 2000s, these works thus find themselves in a point of contradiction in their dissemination given the context of their production and the institutional affiliations for their display and circulation. These artists are each respectively involved in critical and decolonial art practices concerned with migrant and indigenous

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[71] Ibid.

[72] BC Business cites the Royal Bank of Canada--an institution noted for their financial support of the tar sands--as one of Jeffries' clients. See Dogwood Initiative, "Royal Bank Told to Get Out of the Tar Sands," published March 3, 2010, retrieved November 5, 2015 at http://dogwoodinitiative.org/media-centre/media-releases/royal-bank-told-to-get-out-of-the-tar-sands; Royal Bank of Canada. "Energy: The Environmental and Economic Challenge of the 21st Century," [Pamphlet], n.d., retrieved November 5, 2015, at: http://www.rbc.com/aboutus/pdf/RBC-and-the-environment-Energy.pdf

experience and the effects of displacement from colonial and capitalist processes.[73] And yet these political concerns are complexified and placed in contradiction by political economic factors regarding the circulation of the works, as they are disseminated by a leading commercial gallery funded by buyers with direct economic links to British Columbia's own neocolonial practices.[74]

In speculatively proposing that these works under consideration for this study be considered under the banner of "post-photoconceptualism,"[75] it is this discursive set of economic, political, and historical factors to which I attend. These processes of institutionalization are not necessarily indicative of a movement, and I do not consider these aspects in great detail for the purposes of this thesis. What I am interested in is the way these factors of production and circulation delineate another zone of contradiction, inseparable from their aesthetic operations. These political economic factors gesture towards the "unsettled" character of these works in manners that transcend a generalized postmodern uncertainty and rather indicate a specificity of a form of contradiction with particular implications for territorial possession and occupation.[76]

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[73] Jin-me Yoon's work has in numerous instances commented on the connections of displacement between migrant and indigenous experience, and of the *terra nullius* narrative which justifies white settler presence at the root of both. Raymond Boisjoly's works have consistently conceptually considered themes of indigenous subjectivity, heritage, and representation. Christos Dikeakos' practice has been characterized by an attention to histories of displacement on land, particularly through his *Place Names* (1991-1994) piece, on which names for places in indigenous languages are superimposed onto landscape photographs, as well as the artist's own attention to his Greek heritage.

[74] Buyers have included Bob Rennie, Vancouver's most successful real estate developer often accused as largely responsible for the hypergentrification of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and the Royal Bank of Canada, a corporate institution with financial ties to the tar sands. See Bula (2015).

[75] The use of "post" has sometimes been used to signal changes associated with digitalization (see the statement for a recent exibition in Montreal, Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, "The Post-Photographic Condition," retrieved November 11, 2015, at http://moisdelaphoto.com/en/publications/post-photographic-condition-2015/. In another instance, Sharla Sava refers to photoconceptualism as reflecting upon what she terms the "post-medium" condition (Sava, 2007).

[76] Jin-me Yoon, Raymond Boisjoly, and Christos Dikeakos, the artists under consideration in this study, each bear different relations to Vancouver photoconceptualism. Dikeakos, born in 1946, is often considered part of the first group of the Vancouver School, while Boisjoly, born in 1981 indicates an emerging figure in the Vancouver and international art world. Yoon, born in 1960, has a time span between these two, associated with photoconceptualism

Exemplified by the status of landscape in the 2010 *Visions of British Columbia* exhibition, and the growing presence of the Catriona Jeffries gallery, these works occupy an uncertain status with regards to British Columbia's imperial "dreamwork." In relation to the state, the works are institutionally endorsed by circulating internationally and serving as representative of Vancouver, British Columbian, and Canadian art, yet at once critique and repurpose the imperial context of the landscape form. The works bear an "unsettled" relation to the state (in a province "unsettled" in a legislative context), frustrating a fully legible notion of counter-hegemonic art—and landscape art in particular—in the contemporary moment.

This sense of "unsettlement" in the material circulation of the works has metaphorical resonance for the psychic and phenomenological effects enacted by their modes of spectatorial identification. This simultaneous inclusion and exclusion from the state performs an ambivalence reminiscent of colonialism's positioning of the settler subject, for whom the conquest of nature manifests the contradictory characteristics of threatening yet sentimental, exploitable yet sublime.[77] Art works which in an institutional sense belong and do not belong, are recognized and not recognized, produce forms of aesthetic experience which demand attention to that which liminally hovers between what is, to use Baer's words, "known" and "not [known]"[78] within the immaterial fields of psychic space. The convergence of these distinctions

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yet with an oeuvre which in instances has dedicated itself to a different set of priorities. Boisjoly, included in the 2014 Montreal Bienniale and nominated for the 2015 Sobey Art Award is coming into the most flourishing part of his early career, unlike the other two artists whose work has already long achieved international attention. Further see See Nicole Elizabeth Neufield, "Displacing Identity Politics: Relocating Site of Representation in the work of Jin-me Yoon" [Master's Thesis] (2008), retrieved from Carleton University Library.

[77] This too could be claimed for the settler subject's role in the decolonizing of the art work, as, whether enacted consciously or unconsciously, an imperative of conquest becomes indistinguishable and intertwined with rhetorics of "appreciation."

[78] This can further be conceived with consideration that if the years leading up to Expo 86 marked the context for the first generation of photoconceptualists, the years surrounding the 2010 Winter Olympics, Vancouver's second mega event, mark the context for these "post-photoconceptual" works. In situating this group of works discussed in this thesis as "post-photoconceptualist," I am not intending to suggest an abrupt historical rupture indicated by the use of

and parallel movements between the material and immaterial indeed "unsettle" the very distinction between the two. I take this altogether "unsettled" status of dissonance that speaks to the works' sense of urgency to motivate my own analysis.

THE UNSETTLED SUBJECT

Attending to the formal considerations of landscape photography as that which reflects "unresolved ambivalence" within a consideration of visuality characterized by omission and crisis as informed by the Lacanian conception of the Gaze, in conjunction with specific instances of landscape photography, and within a historical and political context of rupture and contested spaces of viewing, I am led to consider the photographic works of my study under a banner of "unsettlement" as a working concept to attend to these different operations and contexts. To be "unsettled" has two primary definitions: on the one hand, it connotes unease, anxiety, unpredictability, a lack of stability and resolution, on the other hand, being "unsettled" refers to "an area of land having no settlers or inhabitants."[79] The former definition conveys a psychic space encountering disorientation, loss, even trauma. The latter definition speaks to territorial space, specifically communicating the imperial fantasy of *terra nullius* or uninhabited land, but also alluding to a more expansive uncertain relationship of territory to the state. Each of these

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"post," nor do I suggest the project of photoconceptualism that emerged in the 1970s--itself contested as being defined as a distinct movement--to be over. Yet I take seriously the suggestion in the 2007 publication of *Vancouver Art & Economies* of the possibility of a group of artists "separate from the Vancouver School but defined by a similar set of rules that speculate on its history" to be in the midst of emergence. Watson, "Discovering the Defeatured Landscape."; O'Brian, [Ed.] *Vancouver Art & Economies*, 22.

[79] New Oxford American Dictionary, "Unsettled," published 2011, retrieved online November 11, 2015 at Oxford Reference website: http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195392883.001.0001/m_en_us1302695?rskey=E7N69R&result=89552

definitions demand a sense of movement, suggesting something potentially threatening; an impossibility of residing, psychically or territorially, in a place that cannot be contained or known in advance.

I title my thesis "The Unsettled Subject" to account for these different forms of liminality and uncertainty. My use of the concept of "unsettled" and "unsettlement" accounts for three different aspects of the works and my analysis. On the one hand, I treat "unsettlement" as a formal and structural feature of landscape, photography, and subjectivity. Exemplified by Baer's and Mitchell's passages, and my discussion of crises of representation above, the photographed landscape speak to a formative epistemological problem characterized by uncertainty. Similarly, Mitchell's provocation of the "unsuppressed resistance" of the landscape as a cultural imperial form further suggest a site of inherent instability. The Lacanian propositions for vision also forward a conception of subjectivity that is necessarily "unsettled" through the lack of access to unconscious experience figured by the Real.[80]

In a second manner, along with these formal considerations, my use of "unsettlement" and "unsettling" speaks to British Columbia's own "unsettled" status within a colonial context. While legal negotiations have been ongoing for the past thirteen years, British Columbia remains the only province in Canada without an official treaty history. Unlike other provinces where historic documents legally overturned territory from Crown reserve land as classified under the Indian Act, to fee simple privatized property, British Columbia indigenous territories remain

[80] It is also worth noting the 2015 exhibition "Unsettled Landscapes" in Santa Fe, which embarks on a similar form of wordplay. Site Santa Fe, "Unsettled Landscapes," published 2015, retrieved November 11, 2015, at https://sitesantafe.org/exhibition/sitelines-unsettled-landscapes/

exempt from the affirmative closure of the free market, in a sense, uniquely "unsettled" from full assimilation within the economy of the Canadian state.[81]

In a third sense, "unsettlement" serves to describe the operations of the specific aesthetic strategies invoked by the works of my study.[82] Jin-me Yoon's *This time being* (2013), Raymond Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* (2012), and Christos Dikeakos' *Scotch Broom* (2006-2009) "unsettle" the suspicion that any project of "belonging" must take the task of wrestling with representation's own reconciliation that "learning to see is training careful blindness,"[83] at the heart of which is the radical apprehension of a naturalized, fully "settled" sense of place. Jin-me Yoon's sequential framing of an ambiguous black rubber-like object demands a rehabilitation of the modes of sentimental attachment to place historically figured by the pastoral tradition, while Raymond Boisjoly's formal gloss on the archive in *Rez Gas* troubles the modes of knowing prescribed by geographic surveillance. Christos Dikeakos' *Scotch Broom* eclipses spectatorial identifications with "the natural" as it is discursively articulated. Unified by a historical emergence in the years surrounding the 2010 Olympics, within a cultural moment where the

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[81] No One Is Illegal, "Oppose the BC Treaty Process," posted January 2007, accessed April 17, 2014, http://noii-van.resist.ca/?page_id=37; Richard Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

[82] While I explore "unsettlement" as a discursive effect of these works, I do not consider that these works "unsettle" all viewers in the same ways. While the bulk of my analysis lies on the way these works defamiliarize the modes of spectatorial identification present within three settler landscape forms in the Canadian tradition--the pastoral, the territorial photograph, and the modernist sublime wilderness landscape painting, and as such denaturalize a settler gaze, I note that the works under consideration in some instances could be seen as speaking to specific audiences. Raymond Boisjoly's *Rez Gas*, for instance, would have a markedly different resonance for an Aboriginal viewer with an intimate relationship with reserve gas stations, than a white settler viewer detached from such a context. Jin-me Yoon and Christos Dikeakos' works considered here, while neither explicitly making reference to any cultural group or history, are nonetheless both made by artists who respectively have often situated discussion of their work in relation to their own cultural heritage. In my analysis I aim to account for these different possibilities of spectatorship, while considering the works within the context of normative (i.e. colonial and Eurocentric) regimes of visuality, within an ideological space coded with the leftover "incomplete project" of modernity. See Hal Foster [Ed.], *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (NY: New Press, 2002): 1.

[83] Phelan, "Broken Symmetries," 15.

Canadian settler state is attempting to resolve its own ambivalence to its representation through landscape,[84] they provoke possibilities for imperial psychic space encountering unease, anxiety, a lack of stability and resolution, disorientation, and loss; disruptions particularly conditioned by an unresolved relation to territorial space which is itself legislatively unstable.

I consider these works under the thematic of "unsettlement" to situate both the forms of uncertainty and meaning yet to be determined by virtue of ahistorical factors and structural tensions, and the interventions of historical and art historical consequence motivated by specific strategies in the works. The concept reconciles the dissonance provoked by the two introductory passages from Baer and Mitchell of uncertainty of control over territorial residence and uncertainty of control over psychic experience. These two forms of uncertainty mark the most profound epistemological dichotomy at the heart of Western metaphysics—material and immaterial—whose confusion is quite possibly the most "unsettling" possibility for any imperialist "dream."

My research is not without precedent. Recent exhibitions "Unsettled Landscapes" at Sites Santa Fe and "Surveying: An Uncertain Landscape" at the Confederation Centre for the Arts in P.E.I. adopt a similar form of conceptual wordplay, considering contemporary landscape art in relation to concerns of colonial history, territorial contestation, as well as aesthetic liminality.[85] My project can additionally be situated within an extant body of literature regarding landscape art in Canada, particularly as I juxtapose contemporary landscape works with what are generally regarded as more canonical landscape traditions associated with Canadian nationalism.

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[84] This takes place through exhibitions such as the *Visions of British Columbia* exhibition, in conjunction with global attention to B.C's and Vancouver with elaborate displays of alliance with First Nations people such as the Opening Ceremonies, efforts which run in distinct contrast to exploitative imperial/environmental practices taking place at the same time. See Harding, 2013; O'Brian, 2007.

[85] See Site Santa Fe, "Unsettled Landscapes," 2015.

Erin Manning's *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Nation, Home, and Identity in Canada* and O'Brian and White's *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art* mark two of the significant contributions to date which consider conceptual and critical landscape art in Canada, offering alternative figurations of landscape with different cultural implications than that of early 20th-century artists such as Emily Carr and the Group of Seven.

My project builds upon these discussions, and yet departs from them by attending less to an overarching historical discussion and consideration of Canadian identity, and more to theoretically-motivated considerations regarding spectatorship and subjectivity within the context of landscape and the photograph as aesthetic and structural as well as cultural forms. These texts have some overlap with the artists I consider here, but the emphasis on Canadian identity in both departs from my approach, which gives more attention to the formal aspects of the works.[86] I also give more attention to considering the way in which the counter-traditions of landscape have in recent years come to form a new space of canonization, one nonetheless contested and fraught with contradiction. Rather than form a broader study, my research involves a close reading of only three complete photographic works. These chapters form case studies of a sort: by no means an exhaustive study, they represent rather selective, illustrative investigations of a common set of thematic and aesthetic points of resonance, not intended to

[86] While accepting the understanding of "belonging" forwarded by these authors as a means to account for the racist and imperialist violence has long differentially enacted who is permitted to claim to belong on Canadian territory, for my purposes I find it necessary to qualify belonging as a radically contingent category, one that, as I argue, has a specific formal resonance with the values of modernity embedded within the formal origins of landscape photography. As I have illustrated, the works of my study both "belong" and do "not belong" within the hegemonic identity of the province, as such complicating such a discussion. I consider belonging within a context of the Gaze and the psychoanalytic propositions regarding the subject, as a form of irresolvable attachment embedded within language as well as visual experience.

account for or define, in any sense, a coherent "post-photoconceptual" movement. Each are positioned in relation to one hegemonic iteration of landscape representation, serving to address the underlying anxious logics of such forms of representation, and intervening at the aesthetic level, not to deliver a distinct "anti-imperialist" or "post-colonial" landscape on the other side, but rather open way for an ambivalent starting place of inquiry.

My study is also distinct from such other literatures' focus in the extent to which it forms a historical account. In conducting my readings, while I engage with art history and the landscape art tradition, I at once consider on the way the use of historical context can risk diminishing the interpretive possibilities for an art work.[87] I adopt Bal and Bryson's suggestion of the production of context itself, not assuming the historical context in which I discuss these works to be a "totality"[88] with any singular set of meanings. In a tradition often associated with semiotics, I prioritize reception and spectatorial encounter.[89] I take seriously Baer's suggestion that "an uncompromising reliance on extrapictorial information can lead us to overlook experiences that become traceable and assume their meaning only after their occurrence,"[90] or that in other words, overdetermining the reading of a work based on assumed context can delineate its reading possibilities in advance. In turn, I attend to close readings of the art works under consideration, paying attention to subtle aspects as well as points of absence in the works, rather than only considering their significance in relation to art historical traditions.

By way of an emphasis on the writing process and a readerly technique, my approach can be considered to take place at an intersection between art history and media studies. My

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[87] Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," in *The Art Bulletin,* Vol. 73, No. 2 (June 1991): 175.
[88] Ibid, 177
[89] Ibid.
[90] Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 12.

methodological considerations are also informed by two different applications of psychoanalytic semiotics in my readings. I make use of what Bal and Bryson define as an analogical model of psychoanalytic semiotics in my readings to draw comparisons between forms of signification in the works and the Lacanian assumptions regarding subjectivity and visual experience.[91] At once, I utilize Bal and Bryson's conception of a hermeneutical model of psychoanalytic theory, drawing on concepts such as the Gaze, and the Imaginary, Symbolic and the Real for descriptive purposes to further enrich my analysis of the works.[92] As Bal and Bryson further describe,

> The [hermeneutical model] is not so much interested in traces of the Oedipal drama or the pre-Oedipal conflations, but rather in traces of the unconscious and the forms these take, disturbing coherence: forms of censorship such as condensation and displacement, and contradictions, incoherences, and their status in relation to the coherent, "conscious" propositions the image offers.[93]

As I consider "unsettlement" in these works in relation to spectatorial positioning and the territorial effects on visual cultural history and present, the attention to "incoherences" and "contradictions" as facilitated by the hermeneutical psychoanalytic model described above serves my aims by permitting attention to forms of irresolution within the photographic works of my study. Specifically for my purposes, part of this theoretical application involves the consideration of the Gaze in relation to Mitchell's assumptions about landscape and imperialism. Particularly throughout the chapters I consider what I conceive of as an "imperial gaze," in relation to the canonical forms of landscape art in relation to which I read the selected photographs under consideration.[94] In doing so, I see my project as continuing in the lineage of

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[91] Bal and Bryson, "Semiotics and Art History," 1991.
[92] Ibid,197.
[93] Ibid, 197.
[94] Lacanian psychoanalysis offers one set of theoretical tools to identify the ruptures of the Subject as speculated by these images. Psychoanalysis, with its own fixation on visual experience, must be acknowledged as a formative product of European modernity itself. Yet I suggest, as others have before me, that it maintains the potential to be

methodological commitments of the *Landscape and Power* anthology, to investigate the ideological production of "Nature" to think through considerations of disturbance within canonical landscape traditions.

My thesis comprises three core chapters. In the first chapter, "The Body in the Land," I consider how Jin-me Yoon's *This Time Being* reflects upon an "unsettled" subjectivity through the disintegration of the body in relation to the pastoral tradition, delineating spaces that frustrate sentimental pastoral landscape narratives of habitable space. Staging an object with an analogically contiguous relationship to unresolved psychic material, these photographs permit reflection on the unresolved histories of the site. This work speculates on "unsettlement" through presenting a visual rupture in the conventions of pastoral imagery, as well as by confronting the viewer with an ambiguous object resistant to narrativization to demand a rehabilitation of pastoral nostalgia.

In the second chapter, "The Place of Memory," I consider Raymond Boisjoly's series *Rez Gas* (2012), a series of three photographs of reserve gas stations in British Columbia. Using archaic photographic production methods, the photographs recall 19th-century territorial photographs taken during North American settlement. Yet in Boisjoly's photographs, the use of exposure and framing techniques which produce a limited sense of depth render the space depicted in the image uninviting as a site of territorial conquest or mastery. Rather, the work suggests the necessity of other forms of looking and knowing in the acts of visual interpretation and territorial residence. In doing so, the work "unsettles" the epistemological and temporal regimes associated with the 19th-century territorial photograph, permitting reflection both on

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strategically useful in examining the mechanisms particular to its very same context of emergence. See Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

contemporary territorial contestation with pipeline expansion, as well as the imperial conceptions of time and space more generally.

The third chapter, "The Subject of History," considers Christos Dikeakos' *Scotch Broom* (2009). Taking the convention of the solitary tree to recall Canadian modernist landscape paintings such as Tom Thomson's *The Jack Pine*, but replacing it with a broom plant situated in a post-industrial site, Dikeakos disrupts the connotations of a temporal conception of pre-history in a vast wilderness configured in such celebrated nationalist works. In doing so, the image disempowers spectatorial possibilities to seize a subject position conditioned by autonomy, self-sufficient individualism, and linear history.

To conclude, I offer a comparative reading of the works by way of psychoanalytic semiotic reading methods and a consideration of contemporary Vancouver photographic art.

CHAPTER I: The Body in the Land: Jin-me Yoon's *This Time Being* (2013)

In Jin-me Yoon's *This time being* (2013), the artist stages photographic scenes evocative of the sense of harmony and rural contemplation of the pastoral tradition. Making use of conventions from minimalist sculpture and conceptual photography, these photographs disturb the conventions of figuration within the pastoral tradition, staging the repetitive appearance of an ambiguous object antagonistic to a legible bodily point of identification. Putting forward a fragmented conception of the body, these photographs frustrate a reading of these sites as available for peaceful habitation, in turn provoking reflection on unsettlement as a territorial and psychic manifestation by offering modes of identification resistant to recognition, and lending speculation on the "settling" processes of inhabitation of rural British Columbian territory.

The imperial "dreamwork" of landscape imagined by Mitchell can be further considered in its specific iteration of the pastoral tradition. Unlike the hitherto discussed sublime wilderness landscapes previously discussed in relation to Canadian and British Columbian landscape art traditions, the pastoral configures landscape as "unspoiled" through a nostalgic longing for a world where the disruptive interjections of modernity find peaceful resolution, a desire for "a symbolic motion away from centers of civilization toward their opposite, nature, away from sophistication toward simplicity."[95] Particularly, the pastoral tradition is marked by the harmony between "nature" and "industry," frequently as indicated by presence of human figures and signs of industrial development. Visually appealing expanses, made inviting through the presence of human figures, configure "the yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, an existence

[95] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1964): 9.

"closer to nature," [...] a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness."[96]

In the photographic series *This time being* (2013), Jin-me Yoon depicts nine rural scenes which recall a pastoral sensibility. In one of the photographs of the series, the viewer encounters the scene of a rural dwelling of an indeterminate location and history. A roof with sunburnt grass slopes over a fence of salvaged wood and a ladder leading up to a hay loft, casting a shadow and keeping a large amount of the upper right section of the photograph indiscernible to the viewer. The hayloft gives the impression that this not a home but a tool shed or shack, and this is further suggested by the unkempt greenery which surrounds it, as though this building is nestled and somewhat neglected within a larger stretch of rural property. A morning glory plant on the left extends tall ungroomed branches which droop towards the roof, and a pile of dead leaves lies below a large bush of pink and purple flowers. A line of twine, bare except for an uncertain white object tucked under the shade of the roof, hangs from a post of the building off to somewhere outside of the frame.

[96] Ibid, 6.

Figure 1. Jin-me Yoon, *This time being* (2013).

With the evidence of rural inhabitation, this scene communicates a sense of pastoral harmony, an affective register of quaintness. This site looks inhabitable, an already-trodden path towards the left bottom of the frame invites us in. The bright pink and purple flowers appear tended with care, the lush green of the foliage give an indication of a space sequestered from the pollutants of city life. The picturesque and inhabitable quality of the sites recall the sensibility of the pastoral landscape tradition, where "Nature" is at once safe, inhabitable, containable, as it is

grandiose and romantic, typically demarcated by the social space of the human figure who mediates the surroundings by walking, resting, or gazing with contemplation. Soft colour palettes conventionally permit these figures to blend into their environments, adding to the sense of visual and spiritual harmony. The viewer is invited into the image through bodily identification with the human figure in a space where human presence, whether in the form of the figure or in indications of industrial development, appears consistently congruent and serenely included within the surroundings.

Figure 2. Edward Roper, *Mount Baker and San Juan Island from Vancouver Island* (1887-1909).

Figure 3. Edward Roper, *Victoria, British Columbia* (1887-1909).

Settler and naturalist Edward Roper's pastoral paintings *Mount Baker and San Juan Island from Vancouver Island* (1887-1909) and *Victoria, British Columbia* (1887-1909) were taken in the immediate geographic surrounds of Hornby Island, where the photographs from Yoon's *This time being* were taken. Yet despite the geographic continuity of the two sets of images, a number of material differences are obvious. Unlike the vast and distant gaze offered by Roper's paintings, Yoon's photograph is taken in such a way as to make it look as though we have stumbled upon something that seeks our attention, that we are getting a privileged view of something that would otherwise have remained hidden. Blades of tall grass extend upwards in the immediate foreground, so close they escape the focus of the high depth of field of the photograph, giving the impression that the photographer was crouched and nestled, peeking over and past the herbage when the shot was taken. We have access not to the vast topology of a site

but rather to the detail of proximity. Save for a tiny sliver of sky visible in the top right hand of the image, a continuous circle of greenery borders the image, giving a partly disorienting, immersive viewpoint within the narrow contours of this scene, locking us into this view.

Most notable, however, is the black synthetic object that forms the incongruent element and the focus of these scenes, at great odds with the peaceful figures in Roper's images. In the above described image from the series, this object appears small in comparison to the hedge and fencing adjacent to it, but arranged in a manner where it is depicted folded back on itself in a triangular form, it is difficult to have a sense of its full size. It is a matte black with an outside surface that reflects little light, a shadow appearing only on the inside of the fold. Partly covered by the grass, it takes a similar place to the viewer, tucked amidst the lush surroundings. Situated along a trodden path towards the entrance to the building, it interrupts the sight line created by the viewing position as well as the textural composition of the photograph, yet at once it mimics the shape of other objects in the scene—the pointed top of the hedge, the rounded edges of the wooden planks, the erect extensions of the morning glory branches—to blend in with them.

While we are offered little context for the significance of this rural scene, we are given less for the place of this object within it, whose rubber or polyprene-like material contrasts with the organicity of the foliage and the unfinished wood. This object has a sleek plasticity unlike the rough and uneven textures of the grass and leaves; it looks smooth and consistent, like the skin of a whale, or of an egg, hard-boiled and peeled open. It looks like the kind of material that would be manufactured for use in construction, to waterproof or to insulate. Highly stylized and formal, it recalls the abstract sculptural work of 1960s minimalists such as Tony Smith.[97] The

[97] It could also be argued that the highly staged nature of the photograph recalls the cinematic trend in Vancouver photoconceptualism. See Sava, "Cinematic Pictures," 2007.

placement of this object demands this image be treated according to the conventions of conceptual photography: we have no indication as to its utility, or its origins, it intervenes in the possibility of reading these sites as preserved from human contact and social presence.

As we observe the object's iterative appearances across the other eight images which compose this photographic series, we learn more about its qualities. The colour and texture of this object lead us to believe it is the same object in each photograph, and yet its form varies greatly within each. In some images it appears stretched out across a wooden structure, a deck, and some logs on the beach, in others, bent and curled at the edge of a pond or on a mossy forest floor. In another, it hangs from either side of the thick branch of a willow tree, like a wet sheet of laundry. Despite its incongruence within these natural places, in its physicality it yields to them. The weight of the object accommodates the surfaces on which it rests, tracing their shapes like a pen against a stencil. At once bearing a tender pliability, so too is the object distinguished by its resistant firmness, as it autonomously maintains a stiff posture within its creased formations, and appears as though it would be unaffected by any variety of weather these environments would demand.

Figure 4. Jin-me Yoon, *This time being* (2013).

As it bends, moves, extends, and compresses across these scenes, the black object commands a resolutely physical presence. In the absence of human appearance, the object occupies the gestural, affected subjectivity that a human body might were it included in these scenes. The object communicates this uncanny corporeality by taking on and imitating shapes of the human body. Its pliability is reminiscent of a skin or a tissue, its stiffness of muscle or bone. In the rural shed image its oval fold has a resolutely yonic quality, while in other images, it

stretches like a sunbather on the beach, crouches within a fern grove like a child in hiding, collapses across two parallel planks like a corpse. But the object also assumes a strange animacy through its auratic command of these places. Ambiguous in its history and qualitatively incongruent with its provided context, there is something not only visually arresting but even possessive about this material. It figures in the series like a personified character appearing in a sequential narrative, in the manner of the presence of the artist and her family in Yoon's earlier photographic series *Touring Home From Away* (1999) and *Souvenirs of the Self* (1991). It appears affected by and responsive to its environments, gesturally mimicking other aspects of the surroundings they contain. But what renders the most vital or inhabited quality of this object is its definitive objectivity—that it assumes this pseudo-corporeality not despite but precisely because of its inanimate status. It commands a gestural, even choreographic space that a body, weighted with the burdens of identity, language, and mortality, never could.

Figure 5. Jin-me Yoon, *Souvenirs of the Self (Lake Louise)*, (1991).

Yoon's work has previously involved iterative appearances of landscape scenery. In *Touring Home From Away* and *Souvenirs of the Self*, the artist appears within a series of brightly lit and characteristically Canadian rural surroundings. In perhaps the most iconic image of *Souvenirs of the Self*, Yoon appears standing in front of a definitive Canadian landscape at Lake Louise, a viewpoint that forms the inspiration for the celebrated painter Lawren S. Harris' *Maligne Lake, Jasper Park*. As the title indicates, the photograph follows the conventions of a tourist photograph, with Yoon standing in front of the grandiose backdrop, centrally meeting our

gaze with her own in an awareness of being photographed. However unlike the typical tourist snapshot, no self-affirming smile can be traced in Yoon's expression, her face and body posture are rather tense and uncertain. We witness in her stance a trace of the performativity of the tourist image; we are led to think about the forms of inclusion, exclusion, and entitlement produced by sites imagined as quintessentially Canadian.

As Erin Manning and Martha Langford have argued, *Souvenirs of the Self* provokes consideration upon the multiculturalist rhetoric mobilized by Canadian nationalisms, and the aspects of experience it fails to accommodate.[98] As Manning suggests, in images of Yoon's such as these, "Canada becomes undone, repositioned, as it were, by the superimposition of the immigrant whose presence within "our land" causes us to re-view our naturalized images of the landscape."[99] Not all subjects, these images suggest, are granted the mobility afforded to the tourist, and certain social histories must remain invisible in order for these sites to function as destinations of picturesque enjoyment. Histories of violence against Asian-Canadians, including the internment of Japanese Canadians in British Columbia during the Second World War, as well as the Chinese exclusion act of 1923, mark two legacies of racist Canadian policy which differentially designate entitlement to Canadian territory and national identity. While such events refer to different ethnic lineages than Yoon's own Korean-Canadian identity, as Langford addresses, her presence in such images is nonetheless partial to a "generalized embodied inheritance" in which distinct East Asian identities are undifferentiated under one set of

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[98] Erin Manning, *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Nation, Home, and Identity in Canada* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Martha Langford, *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007): 176.
[99] Manning, *Ephemeral Territories*, 28.

discriminatory practices.[100] Mechanisms of institutional racialization differentially grant access to Canadian territory and national identity to determine which bodies are designated as "natural" and which as "foreign," "immigrant," or "illegal."

The photographs of *This time being*, while retaining certain formal conventions present in *Souvenirs of the Self*, constitute in many respects a very different work. Each engages with distinctly different photographic traditions--tourist photography and the snapshot, and the documentation of minimalist sculpture and the pastoral respectively. Heavily engaging with abstraction, *This time being* cannot be readily contextualized within a particular cultural history, or be narratively aligned with biographical features of the artist's own life. But while the work does not overtly comment upon the Canadian contexts of racialization and immigration, the staging of the object within the rural scenes of *This time being* brings into focus a problem of naturalization nonetheless at the heart of such concerns. We are led to speculate upon why this rubber-like object registers as having no sense of origin in these wooded rural sites, and what factors—social, cultural, linguistic—determine that we feel it does not belong. The incongruence of this object within these settings confronts the spectator with their own assumptions regarding normative spatial regimes. We may be provoked to consider that this object "not belong" here any more than the migrant body does not belong on Canadian territory, that both involve specific social processes which depend upon selective processes of exclusion.

Both the works in different manners reflect upon the disciplining of the body within the landscape. While in *Souvenirs of the Self*, this can be read in the context of Asian-Canadian racialization, for *This time being* the sense of "otherness" imbued within the black material

[100] Langford, *Scissors, Paper, Stone*, 176.

configures an ambivalent material and epistemological space that can be further situated in relation to the pastoral tradition that its landscapes materially and affectively recall. In *This time being*, the signs of human residence oriented around scenic and contemplative appreciation, such as the garden shed, the wooden veranda, and the tended garden contain no human interface to account for their enjoyment. As a viewer we instead have only the black object, a formation that in its physicality speaks to us as a point of identification and yet at once rejects us through its ambiguous inanimacy. The incongruence of the sculptural element frustrates a reading of these images as sentimental landscapes or sites of pastoral tranquility in the manner of the figures in Roper's images. We are instead faced with the anxious possibility of something unpleasant in the interstices of the logic of the pastoral images: a visceral barrier to meaningful and peaceful inhabitation that keeps us at bay from seamless intimacy and visual mastery over the land.[101]

Through the intervention of the sculptural object in relation to these scenes, and then its inscription within these photographic landscapes, what this figures is the possibility of an alternate sense of sentimentality than that traditionally aligned with pastoral imagery. In her discussion of *This time being*, Jin-me Yoon herself situates the work in relation to her own conflicting feelings of attachment to Hornby Island on which these photographs were taken, describing the photographs as "contemplative and perhaps nostalgic"[102] in her own relation to these spaces. These photographs situate sentimentality in a liminal space for the artist personally

[101] It is also significant to consider the different traditions of landscape engaged within each of the works respectively. Whereas in *Souvenirs of the Self*, Yoon engages with the placement of the body within the sublime landscapes of Jasper Park--a site taken up by Group of Seven painter Lawren S. Harris--here the engagement of sites reflective of the pastoral tradition communicates different concerns. While the sublime may be concerned with spiritual and physical grandeur, whereby "Nature" is conceived as greater than the self, beyond human, and sequestered from civilization, the pastoral reflects a moment whereby the dissonance between "Nature" and civilization have found reconciliation, an indication of "yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life." See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 6.

[102] Sheilah Wilson, "An Interview with Jin-me Yoon," in *BlackFlash*, 31.3 (2014): 54-59.

as well as as a cultural form in relation to pastoral. Rather than a simple rejection of the imperialist associations of the pastoral tradition, here the sense of harmony of these rural sites remains rather figured in an uncertain space. In its allusion to belonging and non-belonging, these images speculate on what a liminal form of attachment could look like to these spaces—a form of intimacy and familiarity that still contains residual strangeness and unfamiliarity.

Just as this irresolved sense of sentimentality—which allows these places to be read as at once inhabitable and unfamiliar, this rendering of nostalgia also coincides with the sense of inhabitation figured by the sculptural object in these scenes. As the sculptural object is definitively non-human, it occupies a different space than the modes of figuration in *Souvenirs of the Self*, and alternatively, in pastoral imagery. In the context of Yoon's practice, this turn to abstraction suggests a number of implications. The "dialectical aspect of space and the body"[103] in Yoon's work, according to Derksen, here produces a commentary on the inhabitation of space that the presence of the artist or another human figure could not. This step away from the body gestures towards mortality and immortality, but these physical implications can be further considered with the specificity of the sculptural form as it recalls work from the minimalist tradition. As Rosalind Krauss argues, minimalist sculpture produces a "radical act of decentering" of the body:

> The ambition of minimalism was, then, to relocate the origins of a sculpture's meaning to the outside, no longer modeling its structure on the privacy of psychological space but on the public, conventional nature of what might be called cultural space. [...] The abstractness of minimalism makes it less easy to recognize the human body in those works and therefore less easy to project ourselves into the space of that sculpture with all of our settled prejudices left intact.[104]

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[103] Jeff Derksen, "Fugitive Spaces," (Catriona Jeffries Gallery Publication) published 2004, retrieved November 11, 2015, at http://www.newrepublics.com/FugitiveSpaces.pdf

[104] Rosalind Krauss, "The Double Negative: A Syntax for Sculpture," in *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977): 270-279.

As Krauss suggests, the minimalist sculpture complicates the viewer's extension in space—a certain spatial rearticulation is demanded as the viewer cannot readily and linearly "project" themselves. For the context of *This time being*, this replacement of the figure in the conventional pastoral landscape with an object constitutive of a "decentering" of the body suggests a fractured form of inhabitation in these sites. This abstract object permits a commentary on embodiment that the presence of the artist, or another human figure, could not, permitting reflection on the discursive space of belonging at the phenomenological level alluded to through the body.

This sense of decentering is enacted in a different way in the one photograph of the series distinct from all the others. As if to stage this frightening suspicion of the impossibility of comfortable habitation within a landscape, in one image of the series Yoon in turn poses a rejection of the viewer from the photographic image. We have a sense of disorienting proximity, an absence of the black object, and a painterly impressionist quality unlike the realism of the other images. The viewer floats above a body of water, looking almost upside down at brightly coloured seaweeds below the surface. Highly reflective, it looks nearly like a polished piece of glass was laid along a forest floor, but some partly submerged rocks along the bottom of the frame confirm that we are at a shoreline. The ocean, the water, the world appears round, like a globe. This image rejects the perspectival rules of all of the others: as well as no appearance of the rubber material, we have little solidity from where we look, precarious as though we could become unpredictably submerged. There is even less context of surroundings, with the line of rocks the only thing which prevents this from being nearly abstract photography.

Figure 6. Jin-me Yoon, *This time being* (2013).

If in each of the other images we witness a corporealized object, here the physicality of the viewpoint is figured as fleeting, weightless, decorporealized. With the perspective sloped downwards, the viewpoint feels precarious, as though we could slip away at any moment. If the photographer is indeed floating above the water in order to have taken the shot, no shadow of them appears where it ought to. There are only some hazy shapes pointed upwards that look like they could be the treeline which occupy half of the image, as the space above them falls in on us. Looking over the surface of the water, we are deprived of the satisfaction of locating the position

of the photographer and the position of ourselves of the viewer, nauseating and disorienting the viewpoint.

The conventions of Western perspective have no grounds here: rejected from the image, the viewer floats, unsecured by the horizon. Unlike the other images, where we have the indication of looking in somewhere and having just crossed a boundary, here we are placed at the threshold of one. We are close to an edge, literally, of a water surface, that we can see into but whose boundary here we do not transgress. Compositionally suspended in terms of the viewpoint over the water, this marks also a moment of suspension for the viewer in terms of us viewing the photographs as it appears in the middle of the series—unable to rest in the depth of the other photographs, we must pause within its alternative perspectival demands. To spend time with this photograph as a viewer means to find rest in the place where rest is typically unavailable—a place of transience.

Securely inhabiting this photograph as a viewer means rejecting the conditions of our own body, we are imbued with the liminality of the black object in the other photographs of the series. This photograph along with the others suggest two different visual strategies in relation to the propositions offered by these photographs of the relation of the body—both the body of the figure in the landscape, and the spectatorial body in relation to the encounter with the photograph. We have on the one hand the presence of an ambiguous form which proposes a "decentering of the body,"[105] on the other, a sequence interrupted by a perspectival ambiguity of the photographed landscape for the spectator. What results in either case is a disintegration of a unified sense of the body, the withheld ability for the viewer to "project themselves" into these

[105] Ibid, 279.

spaces,[106] to seek residence in the manner of the peaceful painted figures. The inhabitation of the human body within this landscape risks fragmentation, "radical decentering" and disorganization.[107] The ambiguous and abstracted gesture towards the body captures a kind of indeterminate residence, which at once destabilizes the body of the figure in the pastoral landscape as well as the body of the viewer seeking identification within the photographic image.

The uneasiness in which the racialized body occupies space in Yoon's earlier works is here figured with a different sense of implications. Engaging with a landscape form that is the stuff not of the sublime and the grandiose but rather the sentimental and nostalgic, sites here which have particular personal resonance for the artist, Yoon produces an indeterminate space of sentimentality. The presence of the object provokes reflection on absence, the possibility of something that is withheld, a "stain of the Real" in the gaze that resists incorporation into legible modes of understanding. The visual cannot compensate for or resolve the presence of this object.

This indication reminds us that the pastoral narrative of congruence continually must reconcile the exclusion of presence of indigenous presence, and of labourers from the land. By the late 19th century when Roper painted his pastoral settings, the Pentlach people on Hornby Island[108] had been entirely exterminated due to "sickness, slave raids [...] and the collapse of their world from the compounding of these misfortunes,"[109] and the CPR railway, constructed under

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[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, 279.
[108] While these images do not explicitly indicate that they were taken on Hornby Island, the artist acknowledges this in written material regarding the work. See Pan Wendt, "Surveying: An Uncertain Landscape." Curatorial statement, published 2015, retreived November 11, 2015 from Confederation Centre of the Arts Website: http://www.confederationcentre.com/en/exhibitions-current-read-more.php?exhibition=1
[109] Government of Hornby Island, "Hornby Island: History," published 2014, retrieved July 29, 2015 at http://www.hornbyisland.com/about-hornby/history/.

the labour of thousands of exploited Chinese temporary workers, had just come to its terminal completion in Southern British Columbia. No canonical pastoral image would bear a trace of these histories, which indicate the harmonious vision as something deliberately constructed and selectively inclusive. There is an untranslatability, a resistance to symbolization of the black object, but so too there is an unspeakability to the trauma of the racist immigration policies of Canada, of the colonial occupation of Hornby Island where these photographs were taken, of the forms of disciplinary violence against those bodies that may never normatively occupy space.[110] While not overtly referencing these histories, nor explicitly representing the bodies violently displaced in the social production of this site, these images demand a form of identification where the tranquility of rural beauty must accommodate and confront a disruption which refuses to be explained or accommodated, one which, in the manner of the psychoanalytic conception of unresolved psychic material, repeats itself over the course of the scenes. The photographs of *This time being* attend to the task of rendering visible that which absolutely exceeds visibility—the persistent trauma of exclusion that haunts modernity's dream pastoral escape.

In frustrating the possibility to comfortably read these images as sites of sentimental escape, *This time being* intervenes in the "settling" discourse of the pastoral imaginary which justifies settler occupation by delineating territory as harmoniously outside of colonial conflict. In doing so the images in turn permit a reflection on the mobilization of pastoral and ruralized nostalgia. The colour black—recurrent throughout Yoon's oeuvre—here can signify the mourning of a possibility for nostalgia, a nostalgia for nostalgia's very possibility. The peaceful reconciliation of the binary of Nature/Culture proposed by modernity here finds a calm form of

[110] Like those of the seal men in Yoon's hometown of Seoul, who wrap their limbs in black rubber materials heavily reminiscent of this very object.

death, replaced instead with the task of attempting to imagine a form of contemplative escape in negotiation with the pain of history that remains to be resolved, one in which the body's entitlement to space in turn demands new conceptualization.

At the most personal, *This time being* then leaves the viewer with the psychically unsettling proposition that just as the process of deeming bodies "other" to territory, as belonging or not-belonging, is a contingent process of cultural production, so too the very affect of belonging—as inextricably personal sentimentality for home—is culturally produced and never self-evident.[111] That which is most intimate and dear may remain outside, and yet the persistence of this strange outsideness may at once be the very space of liberatory possibility for re-imagining a relation to place beyond imperialist constraints.[112]

[111] It is significant to consider that the forms of identification permitted by this work could be experienced differently for different viewers. While this work does not specifically address migrant communities in the Canadian context as Yoon's other works arguably do, as I have argued the reflection the work stages on otherness and belonging still permits exploration of similar themes and points of speculation to Yoon's other works. At once, it is worth considering that the resonance of the pastoral narrative in the Canadian context that I have discussed here may provoke different affective relationships across varied cultural contexts.

[112] See Homi Bhabha on the unhomely for more on intimacy and strangeness in postcolonial contexts, "The World and the Home," in Social Text, No. 31/32, Third World and Post-Colonial Issues (1992): 141-153.

CHAPTER II: The Place of Memory: Raymond Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* (2012)

In *This time being*, Jin-me Yoon constructs photographed landscapes that provoke reflection on psychic and territorial modes of displacement. Through the placement of an incongruent object within landscapes that recall pastoral conventions, these works demand consideration of the forms of violence involved in the production of landscape as sites of pastoral escape, but also reveal the level of intimacy and attachment embedded at the level of the personal within such sites. These photographs demand the unconscious work of the reconciliation of an incongruent object recalling conventions from a form loaded with sentimental associations, and at once the production of new forms of affect and attachment to place staged by landscape which disrupt nostalgic notions of rural harmony.

While in *This time being* the intervention within landscape circumscribes certain physical demands for the viewer, in the photographic series *Rez Gas* (2012) Raymond Boisjoly creates scenes for the viewer which call attention to their own relation to space and the materiality of sight. Recalling the conventions of 19th-century territorial photography, *Rez Gas* frustrates the possibility for epistemological certainty associated with that tradition. In doing so, the photographs stage modes of spectatorial identification which decenter a unified mode of vision, bringing close forms of meaning that resist ready legibility. This gesture opens space for processes of identification and interpretation uncircumscribed by the settler photographic landscape form, demanding a consideration of the imperial constructions of space and of memory, and provoking reflection of the proximity of experience that can never be familiar or known.

As earlier cited, Joel Synder writes in a discussion of settler territorial photography and the birth of the geological survey:

> The assumption is that photographs stand in a special relation to vision, but vision detached from any particular viewer. It is a distributed vision, one that transcends individual subjectivity and, accordingly, individual interest. These photographs are to be understood as disinterested reports. Thus the photographer's achievement does not involve the sensitivity of the artist's eye or the use of an artist's imagination or the intelligent choice of the right depictive conventions; rather, it rests on the technical capacity to record a sight that is understood to be a natural image of nature.[113]

As Snyder suggests, 19th-century territorial photographers conceived of the photograph, and in turn its visual construction of territory, to be beyond the influence of cultural production. "Nature" marks something scientific that can be made legible and interpretable through the appropriate application of visual technologies. The photograph "transcends individual subjectivity," and as a result stands apart from it, involving no investment on the part of any individual viewer. Unlike the pastoral painting considered in the previous chapter, the settler territorial photograph fosters an imperial "dreamwork" not through the domains of narrative and myth[114] to appeal to Arcadian notions of a preserved "nature" as a space of retreat. Rather the territorial photograph in the North American colonial context functions ideologically through the rationalization of space, serving to objectify the territory it depicts and configuring settler occupation and industrial development as inevitable and beneficial.[115] Rather than the

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[113] Joel Snyder, "Territorial Photography," in W. J. T. Mitchell [Ed.] *Landscape and Power* (2nd Edition) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 183.

[114] Of course, scientific discourse can also be argued to constitute the space of narrative and myth. Yet as Synder's passage suggests, scientific discourse occupies its cultural function precisely by being thought of as entirely outside of social influence.

[115] In the British Columbian context specifically, the B.C. archives abound with territorial photographic imagery documenting industrial development. As one end of the CPR railway, these images could be argued to play a significant ideological role in visual conception of the Western province in the late 19th and early 20th-century.

idealization of an imagined past, this geographic landscape serves to justify an optimistic future marked by the calculation and speed of resource extraction and capitalist expansion.

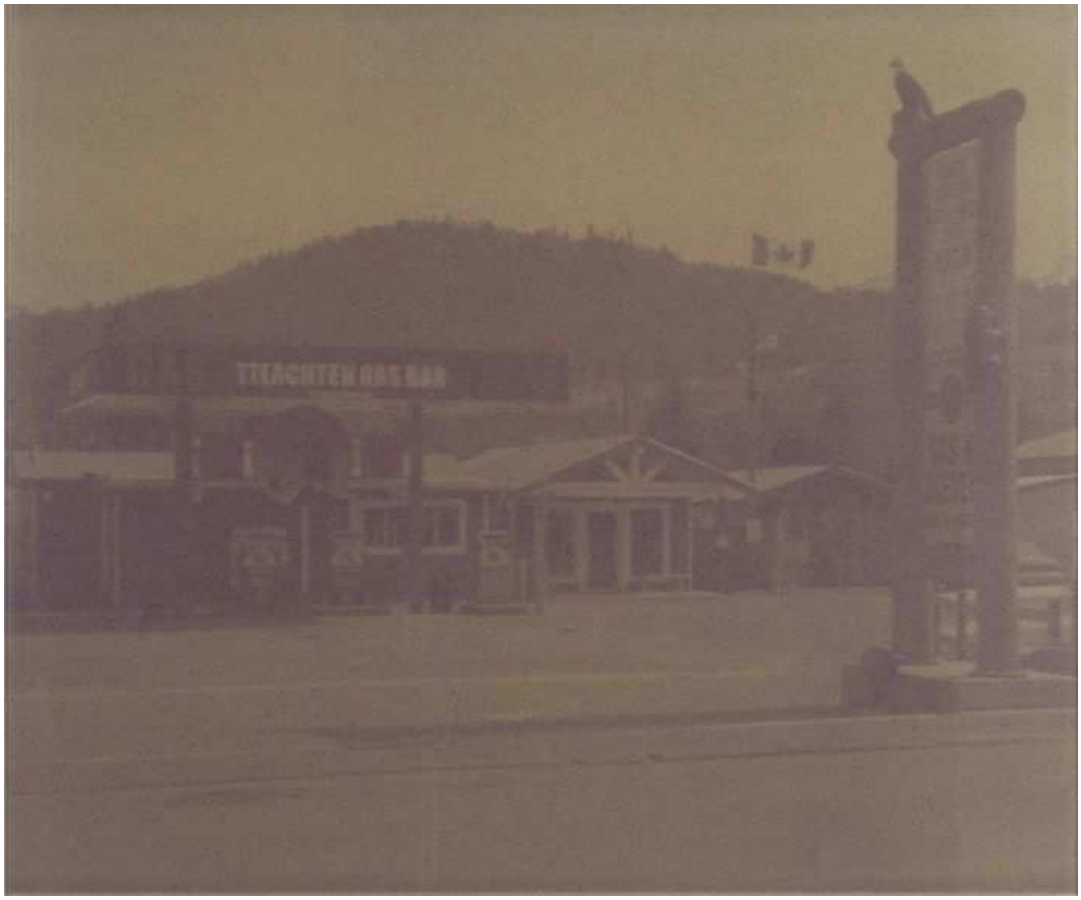

Figure 7. Raymond Boisjoly, *Rez Gas (6336 Vedder Rd, Chilliwack, BC V2R 1C8)* (2012).

The three photographs that compose Raymond Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* (2012) series recall the conventions of territorial photographs, but involve other kinds of demands on the spectator. A sepia tone-like effect recalls early photographic colouration, but little indications are discernible to historically situate the three filling stations represented. The viewer can make out a Canadian flag and "TZEACHTEN GAS BAR" written on a sign above a low awning in one of the photographs; a row of cars in another. One of the stations is barely identifiable as

such, the light reflecting against the building to emphasize its abstract geometric shapes. In each, the gas stations condense into a mountainous stretch of background, away from where the viewer is kept apart by a foreground of concrete.

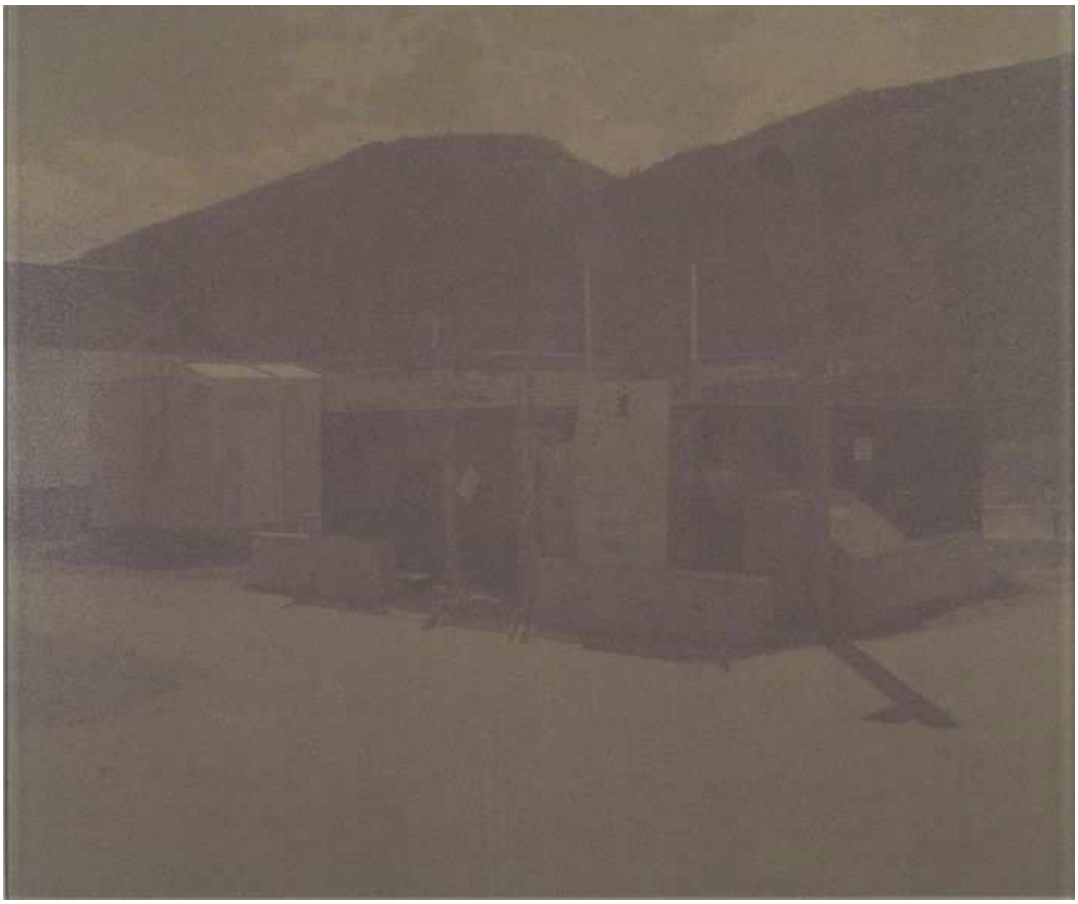

Figure 8. Raymond Boisjoly, *Rez Gas (1675 St Georges Rd, Thompson-Nicola I, BC V0K 2L0*) (2012).

The soft focus gives the impression that a certain commitment to time was involved in order to take these photographs. Indeed, the listed medium of the photographs—construction paper exposed to sunlight—implies a mode of production antithetical to the hyperactivity of contemporary digital photography. Time has been taken, something, possibly to prevent its

disappearance, is being memorialized with care. Yet the bracketed titles of these series—*6336 Vedder Rd, Chilliwack, BC V2R 1C8*; *Ir 10 Rd, Squamish-Lillooet C, BC V0N 2K0*; *1675 St Georges Rd, Thompson-Nicola I, BC V0K 2L0*—offer the precise retrievability of the postal code, suggesting contemporaneity. The hazy space of memory communicated by the visual aesthetic of these photographs contrasts with the information about them that alludes to their immediate locatability, their security within an institutionally designated geography.

The temporal collapse figured by these photographs also articulates itself as a set of spatial conditions for the viewer's encounter. These photographs feel both familiar and unfamiliar—gas stations are a virtually universal mundane and common sight, yet these particular gas stations seem distantly sequestered from everyday experience. The low framing of each of the photographs—particularly emphasized in *Ir 10 Rd, Squamish-Lillooet C, BC V0N 2K0*—gives a sense of weight and groundedness to the viewing position. A minimal inclusion of sky, and an absence of detail where it does appear, further connote motionlessness. The landscape composition which keeps us at a distance from the scene interfaces with the sense of sentimentality and intimacy configured by the archaic impression of the photograph, seeming to recall and preserve a distant history.

Figure 9. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963). Detail.

The visual references readily recalled by *Rez Gas* also compress time, space, and cultural context. On the one hand, as extant criticism notes,[116] the serial photographic representations of gas stations complete with titles to indicate location recall early photoconceptualist Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963). Ruscha's work, produced as an artist's book, speaks to the repetitive uniformity characteristic of both post-industrial space and the photographic process. In *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* the perspectival conditions vary: in some of the photographs the viewer's gaze slopes downwards, in others up; in certain depictions the concrete ground occupies nearly half of the image to show vast expansions of sky. In each case, a black and white focused

[116] See J.J. Keegan McFadden, "Notes With a Broken Camera 3: Gas Station Speculations and the Recent Work of Raymond Boisjoly," in *BlackFlash* (2014): 17-21, in particular.

contrast remains, and we have a sense of significance to these sites that would otherwise remain unremarkable. While *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* comments on mass production, from its formal project to its dissemination in book format, *Rez Gas* in its excessively archaic mode of production of construction paper exposed to sunlight, which as one critic suggests renders the work "more collage using light than they are photographs,"[117] highlights the possibility of photographic uniqueness as it resists the productive capacities of the photographic negative. Ruscha's black and white in the early 1960s was still commonplace for documentative and photographic art, while the sepia tone of *Rez Gas* place the work in conversation with the historical moment of the origins of photography of the mid-19th century.

Indeed, along with making reference to the birth of conceptual photography, *Rez Gas* serves to reference the very birth of photography itself. Critic Aaron Peck notes that along with Ruscha, the sepia tone of the *Rez Gas* images recalls the photographs of nineteenth-century American settler photographer Edward S. Curtis, an ethnologist critically regarded as producing exoticizing portraits of Native Americans.[118] However, as rural landscapes featuring industrial development, *Rez Gas* is more suitably situated in relation to the settler territorial and geological survey photography. In Canada since the mid-19th century, photography has been instrumental in furthering colonial development. While photography served to construct the image of Indigenous subjects that would circulate back to Europe, unpopulated landscape photographs building on pre-existing conventions of visual representation through painting served to compile geological surveys to attract tourists and to aid in the industrial development of land.[119] In the

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[117] Ibid, 19.
[118] Aaron Peck, "Phantasmagoria at Presentation House," published June 12, 2012, retrieved Aug 2, 2015, from Akimbo website: http://www.akimbo.ca/akimblog/?id=541.
[119] Snyder, "Territorial Photography."

Canadian context, figures such as Alexander Henderson constructed early stylistic conventions for photography alongside economic and capitalist settler "development."[120] Photography permitted a means by which territory could be visually recorded, archivally managed, and bureaucratically administered between the colony and the metropole.

In an exemplary instance of the nineteenth century territorial photograph in the British Columbian context, Alexander Henderson's *In Beaver River Valley near 6-mile Creek, CPR, British Columbia* (1885) positions the viewer at the entry of a stream which reflects a mirror image of the mountain range in the distance. This image could be an instructional manual for three-point perspective: the banks of either side of the stream, one marked by the nascent CPR railway, running in parallel congruence, the other with untamed foliage, converge neatly in the centre point of the image where the stream itself also ends. The impression of height and depth is further exaggerated by the position of the viewer close to the ground, emphasizing the height of the trees. There is no neatly demarcated foreground on which one can rest, rather this image has an effect of vertigo as though looking downward from the top of a tall building: the viewer has the sense of being thrust into this image immediately upon its encounter.

In Beaver River Valley near 6-mile Creek, CPR, British Columbia exemplifies what Synder forwards as the ideological implications of the contradiction between "naturalness" and "attractiveness" in the territorial photograph. Here, the industrial development of the CPR railway visually complements the scenery of the land so well it is just a "natural" feature of it, congruent with the "natural" depiction of the scene already taking place. This imperial claim over land suggested by the nineteenth-century landscape photograph, while historically

[120] See Stanley G. Triggs, "Alexander Henderson: Nineteenth Century Landscape Photographer." Archivaria (Ottawa), no.5 (Winter 1977–78): 45–53.

coincident in the British Columbian context, is distinctly different than that of the pastoral landscape painting discussed in relation to Yoon's work in the previous chapter. While both invest in a narrative of harmony between "Man" and "Nature," industrial development and topography, the territorial photograph performs this rhetoric within the language not of cultural sentimentality but scientific positivism, where the territorial photograph is evaluated according to its "accuracy to nature."[121] The land represented is not an image "dream of retreat to an oasis" in the pastoral sensibility, it is rather the mere recording of scientific fact.[122]

[121] Synder, "Territorial Photography," 182.
[122] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden,* 3.

Figure 10. Alexander Henderson, *In Beaver River Valley near 6-mile Creek, CPR, British Columbia* (1885).

At great odds with Henderson's *Beaver River Valley*, which heightens the sense of depth in the image by the extension of the industrial object of the railway,[123] in each image of *Rez Gas* the narrow colour spectrum gives a flat and shallow impression of depth, with the midground and background appearing as though vertically stacked on top of the foreground. The vanishing point at an indeterminate place between each of the buildings seems to not extend from the viewpoint from where one looks but rather appears flattened against it. In *Rez Gas (Ir 10 Rd, Squamish-Lillooet C)* in particular, the scale and depth of the mountains are compressed against the trees and filling station in front of them, flattening the midground and distorting the scope of the mountainous backdrop. In *Rez Gas (1675 St Georges Rd, Thompson-Nicola I, BC V0K 2L0)* and *Rez Gas (6336 Vedder Rd, Chilliwack, BC V2R 1C8*; *Ir 10 Rd)*, the low range of exposure makes the mountains take on an indistinct abstract quality, free of detail. Neither the topographical nor the human-made features are spectacularized here; rather the signage on the gas stations is too hazy to be readable and the compression of midground and background suppresses the possibility of a grandiose view of these topographical sites. Unlike Henderson's visual precision characteristic of a nearly abstract sense of geometric congruence, the *Rez Gas* photographs rest in a place of a tenuous grasp over the security of detail and focus.

[123] In her discussion of 19th-century territorial photography Rosalind Krauss maintains a different line of argument, suggesting that "perspective that tends to flatten, to fragment, to generate ambiguous overlap" features as "the perspective so prominent in nineteenth-century outdoor photography." I would argue that in an image such as Henderson's a sense of perspective more reminiscent of "the "synthetic" perspective of the Renaissance is present, though this is not necessarily present throughout all territorial settler photography. See Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces," 313.

Figure 11. Raymond Boisjoly, *Rez Gas (Ir 10 Rd, Squamish-Lillooet C)* (2012).

Figure 12. Raymond Boisjoly, *now they were not*, from *And (Other) Echoes* (2013).

Boisjoly's aesthetic strategy of inducing limited depth and tending to the threshold of visibility can be seen manifested in a different manner elsewhere in the artist's oeuvre. In the *Hidden Transcripts* series (2013/2014), handwritten vinyl text is mounted on tarps in a shade so faint it is barely legible. In *And (Other) Echoes* (2013), another work following *Rez Gas*, Boisjoly mounts video stills under gray acrylic glass which heightens the contrast to such a degree that the figures in the images are nearly undetectable to the viewer. Distorting scans from moving images from the 1961 film *The Exiles*, a film documenting young Aboriginal men and women who have left reservations in the Southwest for Los Angeles in the late 1950s, the figures rest on the threshold of the viewer's gaze, subject to disappearance according to the angle at which one approaches the images. In both *Hidden Transcripts* and *And (Other) Echoes*, visual mastery is rendered precarious, as we witness its possibility of disappearance before us.

In a discussion of his work, Boisjoly cites an interest in creating a "means for an image to resist recuperation, ways that an image might actually be able to take itself out of circulation, where it isn't precisely legible."[124] Creating images that resist the process—and ostensible purpose—of the photographic image, the images of *Hidden Transcipts* and *And (Other) Echoes*, along with *Rez Gas*, remain permanently seized in an indeterminate space that cannot be readily incorporated by the viewer. As the flattened composition keeps the viewer in the foreground, they are led to "consider their relationship" to the art work and within the gallery space.[125] As the viewer encountering the images of *Rez Gas* cannot advance into the image and gain control over their terrains, they are in turn not encouraged to have visual mastery over the territory depicted. Against the rationalizing imperative of the territorial photograph, to contain, to render scientific, and to objectively lay claim to land, the blurred edges and low resolution of detail suggest components of experience which exceed empirical forms of observation and other mechanisms to rationalize space.

These spatial and phenomenological operations have particular temporal implications in the context of colonial history. "Empires," Mitchell writes, "move outward in space as a way of moving forward in time."[126] While the colonial myths of the endless expansion of space are most exemplified by the *terra nullius* founding narrative of North American settlement, the gas stations seen in *Rez Gas* here remind us of other myths of endless space to be travelled--the Americana myth of the "open road," and the 19th-century project of Manifest Destiny of coast to coast completion of settlement. This relation between space and time is figured in *Rez Gas* in the

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[124] Raymond, Boisjoly, artist Talk at the Mendel Art Gallery (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, September 13 2014), video recording retrieved November 11, 2015, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqGOtotVxaY
[125] Ibid.
[126] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 17.

context of the very myth of industrial "progress": rejecting the technical progression of the photographic method into the sophistications of the digital age, the contemporary works in their mode of production gesture towards temporal backward movement. At once, with the photographic process used that prevents the images from fully exposing the contents of what they depict, they fail to fully "develop" for the viewer, and in turn demand a different concept of time than that of a sequence of events deemed as progressive and inevitable. As the viewer's ability to project into distance is constrained, the images are accompanied with a sense of time that cannot readily advance into the future. While timelessness can be claimed of any photograph,[127] here manifests a particular disorientation of time, as space cannot develop as a linear progression, a series of sequential steps towards a future goal, a colonial-industrial "prospect."

[127] Metz writes in a comparison of film to photography, "Movement and plurality both imply time, as opposed to the timelessness of photography which is comparable to the timelessness of the unconscious and of memory." Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," in *October,* Vol. 34. (Autumn, 1985): 83.

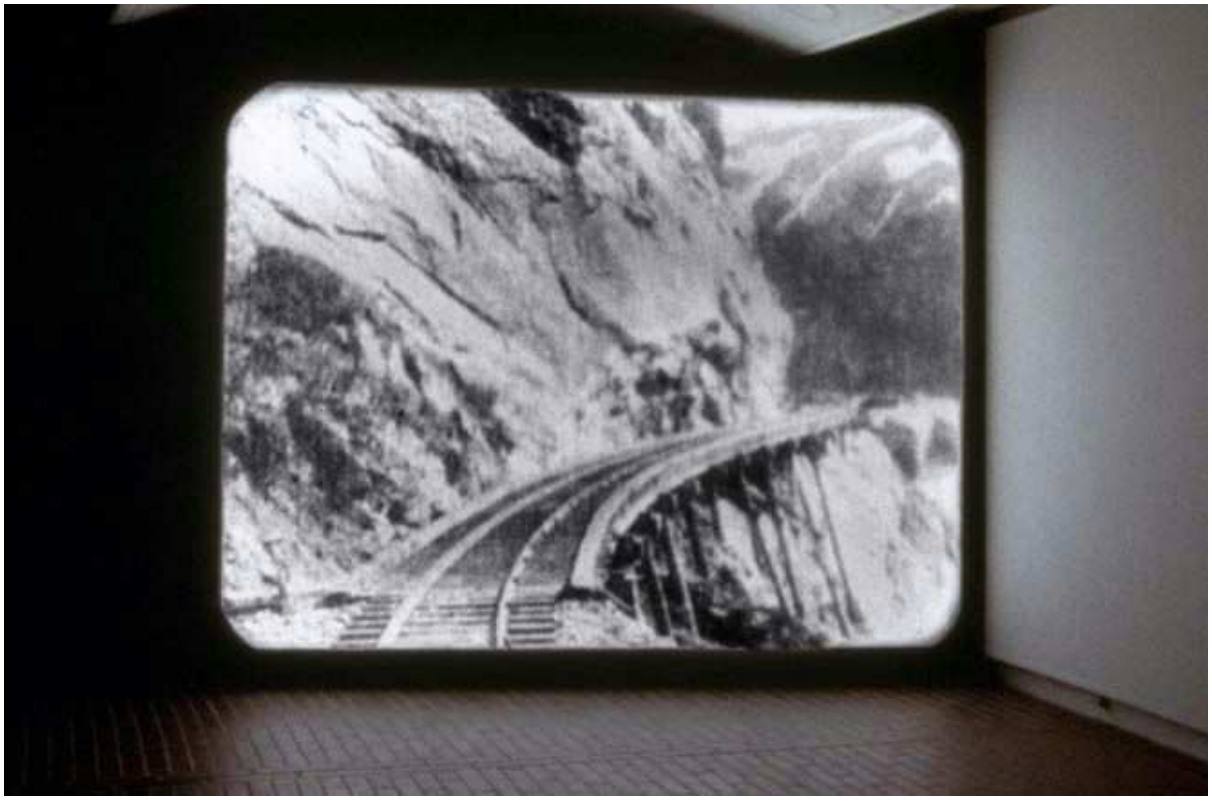

Figure 13. Stan Douglas, *Overture* (1986). Installation view.

This reflection on *Rez Gas* as a stalled sense of progression can be further situated in dialogue with the work of another Vancouver-based artist formally referencing archival materials in the British Columbian context. In Stan Douglas' video installation *Overture* (1986), separate sequences from turn-of-the-century footage from the Edison Company are stitched together in a seamless six-minute continuous loop. The viewer assumes the perspective of the head of a train that circles through the mountainous British Columbian scenery of Kicking Horse Pass, while a disembodied narration reads passages from Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Mounted as a wall-size projection in a darkened room, the work creates a sensorially immersive setting, lulling the viewer with the hypnotic effect of the repetition.

In conjunction with its title—denotative of a temporal antecedent, a moment of time outside of and prior to narrative development--and its accompanying narration which speaks to lost and recovered time, *Overture* reflects upon historical possibility outside of linear sequence. Time here cannot progress because it is unending, forever stalled with the seamless return to the beginning of the video loop. The movement of the train is futile; we never witness its functionality of delivering goods or passengers. The viewer's experience is in tension with the rhetoric surrounding the development of the railroad itself, as emblematic of forward motion and the future possibilities of social and political progress imagined through trade. The viewer's own phantasmagoric experience of encountering the pleasing monotony of the film footage counters the fantasy of 19th-century industrial capitalist development of rapid forward motion, expansion, and progress. As it fails to "develop" in space and in time, the work speaks to a fractured space within the narrative of capitalist technological progress at odds with the promise of temporal and spatial economic "development" imagined by industry.

Douglas' *Overture* speaks to a similar rhetoric of industrial optimism as that articulated by territorial photography. Both refer to a techno-utopian settler imaginary of land as a source of wonder, and yet something that must be contained and managed to secure an abundance of resources exploitable for human use. But while Douglas, within the possibilities offered by the temporality of the medium of film, experientially stages a sense of stalled time, Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* confers a sense of unrealized development in a manner that is specific to the conditions of photographic time and space and the landscape form. Unlike the railway train, which film could capture in motion, the gas station, as with the photograph, serves as a reference to the residual indication of a series of events, the potentiality of time enacted in space, of the past or future of

motion rather than its very practice. It shares with the photograph an indexical relation to movement, not itself extending motion across space, but rather carrying its remains: the symbolic orbit of cars, pipelines, subterranean drilling, of the extension of the "open road."[128] Here, documented in a form where the image itself is in sense stalled by not rendering all visible, the modes of spectatorial relation configured by *Rez Gas* in turn reflect upon and foster a mode of spatial and temporal experience alluding to slowness, presence and reflection.

More significantly, the *Rez Gas* photographs, documenting Aboriginal-owned gas stations in British Columbia, lend consideration on a particular myth of industrial "progress" of significance for Aboriginal communities.[129] In many respects, the Aboriginal-owned and operated gas station is precisely what is claimed to make distances disappear: car travel erodes space between people, federal funding of gas tokens for those with Indian Status ostensibly forms relations of alliance between bands and the state.[130] Yet while the Aboriginal-owned gas station suggests community livelihood, in 2012—the year of the production of the *Rez Gas* photographs--the significance of petroleum development is most

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[128] The two works can also be distinguished by their respective conceptual engagements with the archive. Boisjoly references the form of the archive through self-produced materials, Douglas in contrast manipulates the archival form with the use of found footage.

[129] Reserve gas station have a spatial history particularly related to colonial history of Canada. Since 1876, the Indian Act has regulated possibilities of movement and occupation of space for indigenous peoples with the establishment of the reserve system. Reserve borders are characteristically arbitrarily designated in relation to relevant topographical features of land and intra-band relationships, and have been historically policed by measures such as Bill C-32 which limit rights of entry and exit along gendered and racialized lines. Reserves indicate a liminal and contradictory space for indigenous sovereignty, at once granting an area spatially and epistemologically "outside" of the state, while at once "[remaining] permeable to the laws of the state and the national territories that surround them" See Ryan Holifield, "Spaces of Risk, Spaces of Difference: Environmental Justice and Science in Indian Country." PhD Dissertation. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from University of Minnesota Library Website.

[130] Such gas stations offer spaces "where with your First Nations status card, one can fuel their vehicles and purchase products tax exempt." Tomkohut, "Raymond Boisjoly: Station to Station and Silent Trans-Forming (Exhibition Review), published May 18, 2014, retrieved November 13, 2015, from Red-Assiniboine Research Unit website:https://redassiniboineresearchunit.wordpress.com/2014/05/18/raymond-boisjoly-station-to-station-and-silent-trans-forming-exhibition-review

pressingly encompassed by tenuous navigation of pipeline expansion and its accompanying injurious effects for Western Canadian Aboriginal peoples. As well as disregarding traditional territories and modes of livelihood, reserve lands in rural areas have often borne the brunt of devastating environmental effects of pipeline expansion. Particularly, indigenous communities such as that in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, are experiencing higher incidences of cancer from proximity to the tar sands, where such catastrophes are justified with the very assimilationist rhetorics of capitalist development.[131]

Of all the aesthetic strategies available to respond to this site of pain and violence, Boisjoly offers a reflection not through conventional strategies of rendering visible, but rather through forwarding a form of perception at the threshold of visibility, one which, as the artist suggests, permits consideration of "the political potential" of modes of knowledge outside imperial forms of recognition.[132] Not just that at the most superficial level these photographs refer to an aspect of quotidian experience--the reserve gas station—that an indigenous viewer may have different familiarity with than a settler viewer, these images provoke consideration of "something that exists only for indigenous peoples that isn't meant for general circulation" at the level of epistemological, psychic, and phenomenological possibility.[133] Through the precarious place of the landscape photographs—which remain seized in an ambivalent space of temporal

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[131] The Alberta government website cites "Aboriginal people are benefiting from oil sands projects" (Government of Alberta. "Alberta's Oil Sands: Aboriginal People," published 2009-2014, retrieved July 29, 2015 from http://oilsands.alberta.ca/aboriginalpeople.html), while the Enbridge pipeline corporation website notes "Enbridge is committed to doing business with Aboriginal and Native American contractors and suppliers as a vital cornerstone in its relationship with Aboriginal and Native American communities across Canada and the United States.[...] [We are] committed to early engagement and meaningful dialogue with Aboriginal and Native American people along our pipeline rights-of-way, based on mutual respect and trust." Enbridge Inc. "Aboriginal Communities." Published 2015, retrieved July 29, 2015, from http://www.enbridge.com/InYourCommunity/AboriginalCommunities.aspx

[132] Boisjoy, artist talk at the Mendel Art Gallery, 2014.

[133] Ibid.

unfolding, resistant to the positivist logic associated with the settler territorial photograph, the works provoke the possibility that something may be withheld from and inaccessible to the settler viewer, that forms of knowledge and meaning may exist which exceed an imperial gaze despite all technological attempts to contain them. Furthered by the formal recollection of archival material of these photographs--through their titling and their archaic mode of production—these photographs give the impression that the colonial archive has not included everything, that other moments of history have not been incorporated because they have not adhered to the proper codes of recognition. The imperial "dreamwork" of the Canadian state, in the form of bureaucratic modes of remembrance, is underscored by its weakness of resistance to that which it fails to meaningfully incorporate: the histories of state violence it prefers to forget, the moments of experience that exceed its parameters of legibility.[134]

The operation discussed in the previous chapter of Yoon's confrontation to an imperial gaze with an extraneous element is here alternately figured. Unlike Yoon's engagement with landscape to consider the resuscitation of a new possibility of sentimentality, here the landscape form configures a proposition in relation to territory and its corresponding modes of livelihood of the ambivalent possibility of the fading away of progressive and positivist narratives of history. Forms of certainty are rendered precarious in a way in which the viewer must physically incorporate themselves through their own movement and visual interpretation. It is at the

[134] Against destructive and assimilating imperatives to capitalist "progress," Boisjoly counters the imperialist proposition of indigenous people as "stuck in the past" with an inversive gesture. Producing these photographs whose sites are sourced from an online index (itself an archive of a sort), and referencing archival photography through the titling and the archaic production format, in the act of creating archival-like documents anew these images suggest that the past itself is necessarily a site of contestation and radical contingency. Unlike the repurposing of extant archival materials as in Douglas' case, Boisjoly reminds us of, as Hal Foster suggests,"the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private" and the mobile possibilities for appropriation of memory, for memory's own motion across space, across colonial impositions of temporality and historical sequence. History can be rewritten, memory can move backwards. See Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse." *October*, Vol. 110 (Autumn, 2004): 5.

accordance of the viewer's situated place—both in terms of their proximity to the work within the gallery space, and by virtue of their experiential history—which will determine any possibilities of interpretation or relation.

As land claims even in the present moment within British Columbia's ongoing treaty process are undetermined and unknown in advance, this "unsettling" disturbance at the psychic level coincides with territorial precarity for which sovereignty for indigenous peoples is at stake. Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* photographs intervene in a thinking through of "unsettling" in the reflection upon the use of landscape photography in colonial settlement, and additionally through aesthetic strategies which stage consideration of the psychic effects of colonial processes. Precarious as the sunlight used to expose them that would also in time eventually fade them away, the photographs temporally demand re-entry into a moment of presence, perhaps the only adequate strategy to counter the burdens of colonial history.

CHAPTER III: The Subject of History: Christos Dikeakos' *Scotch Broom* (2006-2009)

Raymond Boisjoly's *Rez Gas* engages with the conventions of territorial photography to reflect on the rationalization of land and other possibilities of conceiving of territorial space. Through the aesthetic strategy of producing a limited gaze for the viewer, these photographs resist the possibility for the settler spectator to seize control of the image's meaning. The liminal space of the reserve gas station provokes consideration upon other forms of uncertainty at the level of territorial contestation in the present moment. This psychic and phenomenological procedure has further implications for the depictions of land represented, as the spectator is denied the ability to rationalize the territory depicted. As these gestures disturb imperial epistemologies of time and space, they demand conceptions of experience that exceed the rationalization of scientific positivism and capitalist expansion and progression.

Christos Dikeakos' photograph *Scotch Broom*, like *Rez Gas*, involves a disruption of colonial-capitalist conceptions of time, space, and history. Here, however, this notion of time is staged through the conception of the individual in relation to modernist landscape painting. Depicting a scotch broom weed plant in an urban setting, the work disrupts the symbolism associated with the conventions of the solitary tree within a sublime wilderness, a trope of canonical modernist painting. In doing so, the work opens space for a thinking through a concept of time and subjectivity resistant and extraneous to the logic of individualist autonomy associated with modernism as well as the post-industrial city.

Exemplified in the early 20th-century modernist painting, the most iconic representation of the solitary tree within Canadian art history is undoubtedly that found in the landscape

painting of the Group of Seven as well as contemporaries such as Tom Thomson. Jonathan Bordo argues that a lone tree permits a personified point of human identification in the midst of human absence.[135] Particularly, "the solitary tree as pictorial Subject falls within a tradition in northern landscape painting that can be usefully linked to the very origins of modernity in the fifteenth century."[136] The image of the solitary tree has a long history in Western culture, considered to have anthropomorphic symbolic connotations and in post-Enlightenment Europe coinciding specifically with notions of the self as singular, contained, and whole.[137]

In Christos Dikeakos' *Scotch Broom*, the artist takes up the symbolic conventions of the solitary tree and the sublime wilderness of modernist painting to configure an ambivalent mode of identification for the spectator. Unlike in *This time being* or *Rez Gas*, in *Scotch Broom* we have a distinct sense of an urban area. A centrally framed plant with bright yellow flowers and branches that extend outwards in multiple directions grows out of a partly browned field of grass figured in the bottom third of the frame. The grass transitions sharply into a concrete lot marked by white painted lines indicative of parking spaces, with industrial fencing cutting across the immediate centre of the image, separating the position of the viewer from a pile of cinder blocks running parallel to the fence. A bright blue sky takes up the top third of the frame, with light stretches of cirrocumulus clouds far in the distance. The image is discretely divided by colour and texture into three horizontal sections: grass and plant, concrete and fence, sky. The unmaintained grass, adorned with dying patches and unkept wildflowers, gives the impression

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[135] Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine--Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape," in *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, No. 4 (Winter 1992): 9; Bordo, "Picture and Witness."
[136] Bordo, "Picture and Witness," 294.
[137] Vancouver Art Gallery, *The Tree: From the Sublime to the Social* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008); Bordo, "Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness."

that this setting has been neglected for its greenery. The industrial building materials suggests that this is in an urban area, or one becoming increasingly urban, a site in transition.

Figure 14. Christos Dikeakos, *Scotch Broom* (2009).

The row of cinder blocks obscures a distant background and a vanishing point from view, inducing a sense of enclosure within this grassy space. In a different manner than the limited view induced by *Rez Gas*, here we are led to think about trespass—either we are looking back on somewhere we have just crossed, or we are tempted by the possibility of crossing, of venturing past these concrete blocks. The fencing running parallel to the cinder blocks marks a double enclosure of this barrier, while the even geometric lines of the spaces between the cinder blocks and along the concrete marking the parking lot further emphasizes a feeling of enclosure in this image, and the portrait format limits our view to either side. Against the optimism offered by the bright blue sky, and the sense of free movement evoked by the uneven growth pattern of the grass, here the viewer, unable to secure themselves within a distant horizon, is rather contained within this uncertain space.

Yet despite this uneasy sense of containment, romantic sensibilities have some purchase here: the sharp distinction between the grass and the concrete induce a sense of vulnerability and isolation to this plant; the neat geometry of the parking lot lines and the construction blocks emphasizes the aleatory growth patterns of flowers and branches. The manner of its lighting give a glowing effect to the plant and render bright the turquoise blue of the sky. The bright immersive lighting of this photograph gives the grass and the broom so much detail that they appear hyperreal, perhaps almost fake. The composition gives the impression that the broom and the patch of grass on which it grows are spatially distinct from the concrete which lies directly behind it, almost as though they are set apart, like a theatrical set. Positioned at the eyeline of the viewer, this plant seems approachable and a point of spectatorial identification.

Scotch Broom forms one of the more recent works in Christos Dikeakos' multi-decade project documenting Vancouver's False Creek mudflats. This historic area, centrally located in the city, has seen many changes over time. Once home to significant hunting and gathering grounds for the Musqueam people, for the bulk of the twentieth century the region was "a big open space in the middle of Vancouver, the blue-collar area of the city"[138] where much industrial activity took place. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the area would be subject to heavy development for Expo 86. The late 2000s, when *Scotch Broom* was taken, mark the transition towards the most contemporary formation of the site—a series of buildings constructed to house athletes during the 2010 Olympic Games that soon became a highly controversial—and financially catastrophic—real estate development. Known as the Olympic Village, it would become a project of the Millennium Development Group, marketing high-end waterfront condos, which occupy the site at present.

[138] Colin Browne, "Location Hunting False Creek: An Interview with Christos Dikeakos," in *The Capilano Review* 3.10 (Winter 2010): 13-37.

Figure 15. Christos Dikeakos, *Concrete Debris* (2007-2009).

Figure 16. Christos Dikeakos, *Squatter's Tent, Olympic Village* (2007-2009).

Figure 17. Christos Dikeakos, *Yellow Blanket* (2005).

In some of the photographs contemporaneous with *Scotch Broom* taken at the site, such as *Concrete Debris* (2007-2009), *Squatter's Tent, Olympic Village* (2007-2009), and *Yellow Blanket* (2005), a continuity of certain stylistic conventions can be readily discerned. All taken by Dikeakos exploring the sites by car—his long-standing preferred method of working—we see familiar materials: fencing, brick, cement. A lively sense of colour through Lightjet prints, a high depth of field, and large formats of display render the detail in these sites clearly visible. By creating a viewpoint to see the city from places unsightly to the narratives of "beauty and progress" with which Vancouver is associated, such works suggest the residual symbolism of marginal—yet pervasively dominant--sites and sights produced by urban expansion, places from which other forms of meaning have already been excavated, places "defeatured" from a unique sense of history.[139] They gesture towards—or explicitly and alarmingly lay bare—sites in which

[139] Watson, "Discovering the Defeatured Landscape."

the absence of human presence is left to interface with the sometimes devastating ecological and psychological effects of the objects and processes of human manufacture. Contiguous with other Vancouver photoconceptualists like Roy Arden (another artist, like Dikeakos, whose practice has also been heavily characterized by collage), these photographs depict sites in transition in a city under rapid change, speculation, and construction.

Figure 18. Roy Arden, *Construction Site and Suntower, Vancouver BC* (1992).

However, unlike *Concrete Debris* and *Squatter's Tent, Olympic Village*, in *Scotch Broom*

we have no geographic context for this site. Neither the North Shore mountains nor the Harbour Centre, two iconic features of the Vancouver landscape, are included within the view. Despite the organization of foreground, midground, and background from the distance of the viewer, the format of this image renders it more portrait than landscape. The bleak sensibility of the other post-industrial landscape is also figured differently: there is no pile of debris, no indications of homelessness by way of tents, no cranes indicating condo tower construction, no urban detritus of garbage or graffiti. In its lack of allusions to Vancouver specifically, this work seems to echo Dikeakos' interest in crafting an "image of Vancouver which is precisely anonymous and mundane as any other industrialized urban landscape."[140] In *Scotch Broom*, the construction blocks and parking lot are indiscriminate from those one might find in an abundance of sites worldwide, and their placement to obscure the background--unlike in *Untitled* and *Yellow Blanket*--prevent this image from being contained to a specific narrative regarding Vancouver's own processes of development and gentrification.[141]

[140] Watson, "Discovering the Defeatured Landscape."

[141] Depending on the method of criticism, then, this photograph can at once be discussed in relation to False Creek and at once in its more abstracted mode does not directly figure into this narrative. I navigate this contradiction here by attending to it in both respects.

Figure 19. Jeff Wall, *Pine on the Corner* (1990).

Figure 20. Marian Penner Bancroft, *Thriving Oak on the Banks of the River Blyth, Suffolk, U.K.* (2012-2013).

Figure 21. Rodney Graham, *Welsh Oaks #1* (1998).

Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine* (1916-1917)

As Clint Burnham argues,

> A defining technique for Dikeakos's work has been the split between foreground and background – an ideological split which makes possible – which constructs via a binary aesthetic formalism – what he calls the capitalist picturesque. Everything is okay in one part of the picture, and everything is definitely not okay in the other part [...]."[142]

In the context of *Scotch Broom*, this split with the foregrounding of the broom plant rather than objects which read as urban detritus give the photograph a different set of implications than

[142] Clint Burnham, "False Hood," Catriona Jeffries Gallery (2002), retrieved online at http://catrionajeffries.com/wp-content/uploads/press/dikeakos_burnham_2002.pdf, 4.

Concrete Debris or *Yellow Blanket*. In foregrounding this broom plant rather than an industrial object, *Scotch Broom* recalls the symbolism of the solitary tree--one with a long history of representation in Western art history, invoked in the tree studies of other Vancouver-based photographers like Rodney Graham, Marian Penner Bancroft, as well as Jeff Wall--but finding a particular lineage in Canadian modernist landscape painting. Particularly, the focus on the broom plant permits *Scotch Broom* to nearly identically mimic the composition of Tom Thomson's *The Jack Pine* (1916-1917). In Jonathan Bordo's discussion of this famous painting, he notes that taking place at a moment in art history immersed in visually constructing a sense of a time of industrious opportunity, of an unwritten future prompted by imperial "discovery," the image of the solitary tree coincides with a visual regime that "exalts a picture that testifies to an unpicturable condition--the wilderness sublime--while simultaneously legitimating, as a landscape picture, terrain violently seized, dispossessed of its indigenous inhabitants, and reconstituted as territory."[143] Unlike other Canadian modernist painters more present in the British Columbian tradition, casting the landscape as mystically possessed as in the work of Jack Shadbolt and Emily Carr, in works such as Thomson's this visual rhetoric of discovery offers an image of the natural world as outside and prior to human history, one sequestered in a pre-symbolic field of experience and antithetical to culture and language, and as such vastly available for possession and inhabitation.

In both *Scotch Broom* and *The Jack Pine* there is a central plant with drooping, wind-swept branches, and a sharp distinction of foreground, midground, and background. Yet unlike the jack pine, scotch broom is a plant indicative of artifice rather than indigeneity. In the

[143] See Bordo, "Jack Pine".

landscape construction of the Southern British Columbian coast, scotch broom is a plant native to Europe, only introduced to the Americas in 1850 when settler Captain Walter Grant intentionally planted it out of nostalgia for the Scottish countryside. Lee notes that "cultural factors – including its perceived beauty, utility, and ornamental use" were considerable factors in broom's rapid spread, where colonists perceived beneficial uses for the "yellow gold" plant "sweetly reminiscent of 'home" that already had a sentimental place in the British imaginary.[144]

The affection for broom in the colonial era contrasts with its contemporary perception as a weed and an invasive species that has become a pest for land users across Vancouver Island. Growing in magnitudes and altering the colour and character of the landscape as it had existed for centuries, the plant "poses a significant threat to some ecosystems in coastal British Columbia"[145] as it "invades [...] native grasslands" at the expense of regional biodiversity and indigenous plant life.[146] Symbolically, broom functions as metaphor for the colonial project at large: directly intended for the Europeanization of the native territories, it proceeded to invade, displace, and impose homogenization while being perceived as a beneficial, beautifying force. As "gold", it bears an affinity to Mount Olympus itself, and the "sacred olive groves" which surround it,[147] and yet like the Olympic Village site, this speculative gem is "invasive" and ultimately--whether financially, socially, or environmentally--disastrous.

The cultural resonance of broom has a different relation to space and time than the jack pine: while the latter in this art historical context refers to an imagined point of pre-history, an

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[144] Troy V. Lee, ""*Glistening Patches of Gold*": The Environmental History of Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) on Southern Vancouver Island, 1848-1950," in *B.C. Studies*, no. 166, (Summer 2010): 39-54.
[145] Ibid, 47.
[146] Ibid, 50.
[147] Browne, "Location Hunting False Creek: An Interview with Christos Dikeakos."

indication of a starting place of history, as an imperial import the broom plant can never figure a pre-historical moment. Rather its rapid growth works as analogue to capitalism's own detemporalization through endless repetition and the corresponding "defeatured" landscapes it produces. If the jack pine connotes the tree as a symbol of life, the broom plant connotes ravenous multiplicity and unambiguous homogeneity, the death of botanical diversity. Unlike the slow growth of a tree, this photograph depicts broom in a form foreign to its very existence, in a singular form that temporally can only be indicative of a fleeting moment before its imminent multiplication, or of the residual effects of past labour of horticultural intervention, a direct indication of human interference.

This sense of temporality and history is additionally figured for the viewer by virtue not solely of the symbolic connotations of the plant but also by its location within its surroundings and in turn the viewer's own spectatorial positioning. Unlike the sense of access to territory provided for the viewer in a work like *The Jack Pine*, in *Scotch Broom* the limited gaze from the hidden background renders the broom plant a frustrating point of identification for visual mastery. Where the tree serves as "stand-in for the specular witness"[148] of an impossibility to reside in a site imagined as taking place before history and outside of signification, the solitary plant here is situated within surroundings bearing direct evidence of human presence and production rather than a sublime wilderness antithetical to civilization. The parking lot, the fence, and the construction materials all speak to human interactions with space, ones that have largely relied upon the eradication of wild areas. This site cannot be endlessly explored or discovered; rather, we have the sense that our interaction with it would be circumscribed, already

[148] Bordo, "Picture and Witness," 307.

defined by cultural, civic, and legislative forms of use. There is no space of prospect here, no pleasure of a background fading off into the distance, changing slowly in colour like the distant mountains in *The Jack Pine*. With the abrupt and sudden end to extension of space, the viewer is rather encountered with limits, told there are places they cannot go.[149]

As both the sense of nature configured in this image and the sense of entitlement to this place are denaturalized, in turn, the concept of subjectivity configured here disempowers the conception of autonomous individuality associated with European modernity. The autonomous individualism associated with the solitary tree and its presence in a vast wilderness expanse is here troubled by the symbol's failure to convey individuality. The broom in this image represents the contradiction of subjectivity under capital: attempting to cling to a notion of bourgeois individualism within homogenizing social and economic mechanisms dedicated to the eradication of difference. Alongside the symbolic resonance of the broom, the modes of spectatorial identification configured by this image resist the possibility of an unhindered gaze that can visual claim a territorial expanse. The limit of the concrete blocks produces a sense of containment along with the repetitive configuration of the blocks that limits one's ability to locate oneself, to differentiate oneself in space and time. In the context of Dikeakos' image, the formation of the viewer's "specular" or mirrored reflection or status, the viewer must identify

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[149] As *Scotch Broom* speaks to, and frustrates, an omnipotent gaze imagined in modernist painting, it also speaks to a specific imaginary of a powerful gaze particular to Vancouver. Nicknamed the "glass city," since the 1980s Vancouver's industrial development has been particularly characterized by the dominance of condos primarily constructed with steel and glass. Relatively cheap and fast to build, these buildings not only keep pace with the city's rapid economic speculation, but also are markedly suitable for a city renowned for its beautiful scenery. These "see-throughs" as they are referred to by some locals, imbue a visual regime and construction of a gaze particular to the city. This extension of the view of the buildings dominant on the skyline permits a "voyeur's paradise" where "everybody gets to watch each other." In a city where "the neo-West Coast home has window curtains that are automated with a remote control, opening onto nature like theatre curtains," this glass construction additionally "actualizes nature," constructing it as spectacle. See Coupland, *City of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009): 124; Coupe, "Over British Columbia" [Art Video.], 2012, retrieved July 29, 2015, at http://www.coupeletat.org/projects/over-british-columbia/

with an object of imperialist nostalgia that correlates with destruction. As Burnham further suggests, the "radical *pictorial* incongruity" in Dikeakos' images permits "consideration of political conflict" but also of a split or unresolved subjectivity on behalf of the spectator.[150] The conception of individualism promised by modernity here confronts the monotony of the post-industrial city, where, in the event of one's inability to distinguish oneself in space, everything becomes abstraction.[151] Blindness becomes a formative condition of subjectivity.[152]

As a reflection on the symbolism and modes of seeing in *The Jack Pine*, *Scotch Broom* does not simply to demonstrate that one plant is "artificial" on Canadian territory and one is not. Rather, this photograph considers both as acts of invention, thus stressing the radical contingency of settler occupation. The sense of narrative ascribed to "Nature" is produced through forms of meaning and acts of looking socially produced. Bringing into plain sight an object that deceives its initial familiarity, an object that reflects the very process of invention of the settler gaze, we are led to consider the settler's mourning for the impossibility of pre-history, of a notion of "Nature" outside of cultural invention. The physical construction of "false" creek here demands a reflection on the false memory of a notion of time uncircumscribed by history.

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[150] Burhnam, "False Hood," 4, italics in original. This consideration of specularity could be further considered in relation to the Lacanian concept of *méconaissance*, the event of visual experience where the subject must come to terms with the disjunct between what they imagine themselves to be and the reality that actually presents itself. See Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Écrits* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002): 78.

[151] Perhaps this serves to situate Dikeakos' note in an interview that according to local Squamish and Musqueam knowledge "there's only one thing that's absolutely certain about [the Olympic Village] site; it was called "suicide." It is a tremendous irony that an indistinction of vision often cited as the very appeal of West Coast landscape. Grey weather, blurring together sea and sky blur in an indistinct mass, fulfills a different yet similar function to suburban dystopias, identical condo towers, or indiscriminate fields of yellow weeds. Colin Browne, "Location Hunting False Creek: An Interview with Christos Dikeakos," 23; Coupe, "Over British Columbia."

[152] This offers a point of connection with Boisjoly's work. Whereas in *Rez Gas* Boisjoly operatively employs a limited field of vision to provoke consideration of epistemological possibilities outside of positivist visual regimes, here *Scotch Broom* makes use of symbolic elements to similarly lend consideration on the dominance of the eye.

In doing so, this photograph reflects upon the possibility of a certain kind of retrieval in the midst of the post-industrial city at present. We have a simultaneous invocation to and disassembly of settler sentimentality; romanticized affects are invoked at the very moment of their undoing. While Yoon's *This time being* provokes consideration of a rehabilitation of sentimentality, in *Scotch Broom*, the foregrounding of an object of settler nostalgia here reflects on the mechanisms of its production, and permits the uncertainty of a conception of a history of "wilderness," of space outside of time, of human experience beyond language. As the site of the taking of this photograph is being marketed through claims to authenticity and naturalness,[153] Dikeakos responds with a photograph attesting to a gap in modernity's promise to seamlessly reconcile binaries. The landscape, if always "[staging] history,"[154] here frustrates a conception of the past invested with the prospect of an abundant, endless, future. We rather see here that there are endings, and meet the strong suspicion that with one more metre of concrete the plant would not grow here at all.

In turn, Dikeakos' photograph unsettles not only the narrative staged by *The Jack Pine*, of a fantasized point of the apprehension of a moment of pre-history, but also the concept of the solitary individual as the subject of the unfolding of time. A plant defined by multiplicity is not

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[153] The marketing of the Millennium Water development at the Olympic village site, in progress in the immediate surrounds when *Scotch Broom* was taken, makes use of a similar rhetoric. The campaign's website advertises "homes oriented to optimize views, light, and fresh air," and "extensive balconies with panoramic water and park views" alongside and directly part of a construction of the natural environment. A section of the campaign website titled "Legacy" boasts that "One of the most exciting results of this project is the creation of an island the size of a football field just east of the Cambie Bridge on the South shore of False Creek" that serves as home to native trees and plants. In a bizarre, heavily romanticized pastoral construction, the website further cites that residents can "Pick a juicy pear, smell the lavender and watch the birds and bees gather among the flowers and berries. The community will be landscaped primarily with indigenous plants that will also contribute to a gene bank for local plant species. A dry-rock stream in summer and a rivulet in the winter months, rain gardens will provide beauty and a place for children to explore the significance of rainwater…" See Millenium Development Corp. "Community," retrieved July 29, 2015, from Millenium Water website: http://www.millenniumdevelopment.com/Olympic-Village/.

[154] Bordo, "Picture and Witness," 303.

whole and contained. The fracturing between foreground and background that interrupts the possibilities of the growth pattern for the plant demands a concept of spectatorial subjectivity threatening to a notion of the self as fully whole and independent. As the narrative of a moment of time prior to culture, of a sense of "Nature" beyond human construction, shows itself to be illusory, in turn the historical subject of modernity and of imperialism finds itself split between that which is known and unknown, taken to task to traverse the fantasy of the imperial narrative of History.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have reflected upon "unsettlement" as a thematic working concept to consider the implications for psychic and territorial space of three different photographic mobilizations of landscape. I have considered how on the one hand, these images represent the processes of settler occupation on British Columbian territory, and on the other, how they destabilize linear and resolved modes of identification through the photograph and other "settling" forms of spectatorship at the level of the personal. Jin-me Yoon, Raymond Boisjoly, and Christos Dikeakos, while making use of varied aesthetic strategies and engaging in divergent art historical and political discussions, collectively address an "unsettled" spectatorial subject, investing in the structural contradictions of the landscape photograph to consider the representative limits of the photograph as form as well as the role of landscape art in Canadian narratives of colonial nostalgia, scientific positivism, and progressivist history.

As a tension between nearness and distance, as an indication of an unresolved site of settler occupation in imperial contexts, and as an elusive setting of memory and meaning at the level of personal, psychic space, a landscape photograph figures a contradictory and ambivalent object of encounter. I have considered photographic landscape works in this thesis whose operations take place at the intersection between W. J. T. Mitchell's proposition of landscape as a "symbolic form"[155] of "unresolved ambivalence"[156]emerging within the 19th-century context of European imperialism, and Ulrich Baer's suggestion of the landscape photograph as formally provocative of contradiction and ambiguity at the level of subjective encounter and psychic

[155] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 14.
[156] Ibid, 10.

experience. Collectively these works propose a conception of ambivalence with material and immaterial consequence, which takes into account contemporary concerns over contested territory in British Columbia as well as possibilities of unresolved meaning in the psychic experience of the spectatorial subject.

I have considered the works primarily in relation to 19th-century processes of colonization, contextualized by different canonized landscape traditions. My interest lies specifically in postmodern interventions in the ongoing resonance of ideals of European modernity in the legacy of Canadian landscape art. This has involved attention to the concept of "Nature" and the continued ideological significance of the pastoral, the scientific, and the sublime. While I could have framed my study to consider primarily urban and post-industrial photographic landscapes in the tradition of much of the work of the New Topographics and the first generation of Vancouver photoconceptualists, or more abstract landscapes, my focus on works which foreground rural scenery or plant life has allowed me to attend to continuing the work of texts such as O'Brian and White's *Beyond Wilderness* as well as Mitchell's *Landscape and Power* anthology, as well as centralize concerns over land—as a contested space of resource extraction but also as an affective space—in my readings.

While I have discussed these works in terms of their relation to canonical forms of landscape representation in the Canadian tradition, as I suggested in the introduction, part of the "unsettled," indeterminate and at times contradictory set of factors delineating the parameters in in which these works can and cannot be read is their own ambivalent positioning in relation to the Canadian state at the contemporary moment. While referring to the traditions of the pastoral, the geological survey, and the sublime wilderness help to read these works, in placing the

contemporary works in this context I do not intend to suggest that they offer a linear, contained alternative or counter-hegemonic response to such traditions. Rather, I propose that in adopting conventions from these traditions, Yoon, Boisjoly, and Dikeakos present new demands for the thinking of landscape art and conceptual photography more generally in the contemporary moment.

The growing place of Vancouver in the international art world will determine what shape the "unsettling" operations of landscape and photographic art take in decades to come. The Canadian West Coast's historical role as an isolated space producing counter-institutional pictorial photography will face changes as the city no longer identified as an outcast but a rather a forerunner in global conceptual art practices. As such artists navigate such new recognition, they face what Stan Douglas suggests as "the predicament of any group of people who want to contest the actions of a social institution by speaking that institution's language and [...] thereby, run the risk of becoming bound to their antagonist."[157] The Catriona Jeffries Gallery is one of the institutions leading these developments, but other economic changes will additionally serve to determine new contexts for Vancouver and British Columbian art. As Melanie O'Brian suggests:

> [Vancouver's] rapid change and growth has been a result of remote ventures in that it has been colonized, developed, and largely supported by global migrations of financial and cultural capital. 1 As the frontier terminus of a westward expansion of European colonization and, more recently, as an entry point from Asia, Vancouver has sought (and made) its fortune through ventures that require a belief in risk and progress, such as timber, mining, fishing, gold, tourism, technology, and most characteristically, real estate and land development. 2 These industries have been instrumental in the short history of British Columbia and although the province's economy remains based on natural resources, the city's economy has largely given way to the service sector and is thus attracting investment that relies on status and cultural assets. As Vancouver's speculative focus turns from extraction industries to abstract, symbolic economies contingent on the

[157] Stan Douglas quoted in O'Brian, *Vancouver Art & Economies*, 16.

> forces of globalization, the city's desire for world status has prompted it to seek an international stage for validation.[158]

Within this context, rather than the ongoing legacy of territorial displacement in British Columbia dating from the 18th and 19th-centuries, urban gentrification constitutes an urgent lens through which to consider contemporary neocolonial practices. Factors such as resource extraction in rural areas to support the city, the urban displacement of Aboriginal communities, and the increased market value of scenic rural getaways close to the city for middle and upper class vacation homes[159] constitute important factors for British Columbian landscape in the 21st-century. This in turn demands a consideration of photography at the present moment, a medium which, unlike other forms, demands that the artist not necessarily adapt one's practice to the most recent technological changes, but at the very least choose a position in relation to such developments.[160]

The "unsettling" legacy of these works is best situated not within the outcomes of a particular discourse, nor measurable in relation to policy regarding territorial occupation, environmental devastation, and other neocolonial measures at present. The politics prescribed by the works in the face of the constellation of Canada's imperial present can perhaps best be thought through in relation to Paulette Regan's *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*. In this text, Alison Jones offers a positive concept of "unsettling" in the colonial context:

> It is the strangeness of difference – the unfamiliar space of not knowing – that is so hard to tolerate for the colonizer whose benevolent imperialism assumes both herself or himself as the center of knowing and that everything can be known. For the colonizer-settler engaged in critical inquiry there is an inevitable and disturbing moment

[158] O'Brian, *Vancouver Art & Economies*, 13.
[159] See Coupe, 2012.
[160] Wilson, "An Interview with Jin-me Yoon," 56.

> when the indigenous teacher or informant speaks. It is a moment of recognition – perhaps unconscious – that some things may be out of one's grasp. It is a fleeting, slippery glimpse of (the possibility of) something inaccessible and unknowable.[161]

The space of not knowing, a space opened by the photographic works of this study, can function as a productive site of learning. As much as a landscape photograph can be said to have an indexical relation to territory, these photographs may permit reflection on new forms of connection to land. Landscape and other mechanisms of representation cannot be transcended, but perhaps modes of belonging may be found that embrace dissonance as a site of departure. In doing so, these works offer one imaginative potential of a new intimacy with territory, one that tentatively lifts the nostalgic and scientific blanket covering the imperial "dreamwork" of "Nature," one that is never simple or known in advance.

Part of the manner in which these works propose such a potential is through the use of visual strategies to identify and contemplate sites of dissonance in the cultural resonance of imperial landscape. Despite their important differences,[162] these works collectively tend toward a denaturing of the claim to naturalness figured by the landscape and the photograph, two historical inventions of modernity caught within their own anxiety of attempting to conceal and naturalize their mediated artifice and cultural contingency. They provoke the possibility that a fragment of the Real of "unsuppressed resistance" of territorial occupation may forcefully slip into public life, in the same manner as an unresolved memory. They gesture towards the

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[161] Alison Jones quoted in Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011): 24.

[162] For instance, Yoon and Dikeakos' works recall the pictorial cinematic and highly staged quality of other photoconceptual work (see Sava, "Cinematic Pictures"). Boisjoly's *Rez Gas*, making use of an archaic photographic format and process of production, runs in congruence with other contemporary works referencing the archive (for instance, Douglas' *Overture* earlier discussed). The urban setting of *Scotch Broom* contrasts with the rural scenery of *Rez Gas* and *This time being*. Each engage with different genres of landscape: Yoon combines certain conventions of travel photography with minimalist sculpture along with conventions from pastoral oil painting and watercolour, while *Rez Gas* recalls late 19th-century and early 20th century territorial photography, and Dikeakos recalls conventions of modernist landscape oil painting.

excessive aspect of imperial dreamwork figured by Mitchell, a point of failure in the visual functions of landscape as capable of containment, rationalization, and possession, and yet at once, these works address the inability for photographic representation to neatly resolve for the viewer a decisively "anti-imperialist landscape;" a point of identification unburdened by ambivalence and contradiction within an alternate set of concerns.

Indeed, part of the offering of these works in their conceptualization of "unsettlement"—as an aesthetic and political practice—is precisely their investment in contradiction as a space to be sought for its own means. *This time being*, *Rez Gas*, and *Scotch Broom*, rather than offer simple classifications of imperial and counterhegemonic landscapes, instead accept that alternatives to institutional forms will necessarily themselves be transitional in meaning. The dominance of the imaginaries of the pastoral, the geological survey, and the wilderness, rather than be altogether rejected in favour of alternative conceptions of landscape, instead offer fruitful points of departure at which such new landscapes can be made manifest. Points of tension and irresolution are not solely part of a political strategy induced to encourage reflection on behalf of the settler spectator, but also mark a methodical aesthetic process that can facilitate an "unsettlement" of canonized forms precisely in the act of recalling and staging their conventions. These works propose a notion of "unsettling" at the very site of the sign, which leaves room to maintain contradiction as a liberatory space, accountable to conceptions of power and visuality that resist reducibility.

As they each gesture towards a sense of rupture in the coherence of visual experience, the reflections of the works can be particularly considered in relation to the Lacanian concept of the Gaze. These works reflect on the Lacanian suggestion that subject formation takes place in

attempts to compensate for the "blindness" or failure inherent to visual experience.[163] These photographs not only provoke consideration of the contemporary neocolonial violence taking place outside of the avowed or "conscious" space of the state, they also hint at the Real of the photographic imaginary—that which exceeds legibility. Through varied stagings of incongruence or uncertainty in relation to landscape, these photographs expose the attempt to rehabilitate a sense of origin, a sense of belonging, or of home where it has been lost, which is produced in and bound to the event of visual experience.[164] The works disrupt allusions to "Nature" as a site of return, holding in tension the burden of a history of territorial displacement with a liberatory rejection of homesickness. This dual motion favours another uncharted possibility for political life, a possibility that will not be "discovered," "explored," and exploited like territory deemed *terra nullius*, but rather approached with a generous and humble curiosity.

As they each provoke the reflection that there are aspects of experience that cannot be contained by institutional visual paradigms, these photographs additionally suggest that at the level of the personal, memory is one of the places that overdetermines a relation to a landscape photograph, or as Baer might phrase it, reveals the "elusive" site of "memory we did not know existed."[165] Whether in form of an image of rural place of personal significance and political history, a commentary on the very act of photographic preservation, or a representation of a rapidly changing coastal metropolis, these photographs adopt an aesthetic stance

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[163] Phelan, "Broken Symmetries," 15.
[164] This convergence has been explored at length by Homi Bhabha in the context of globalization, intimacy, and migrant experience. See Bhabha, "The World and the Home," in Social Text, No. 31/32, Third World and Post-Colonial Issues (1992): 141-153. I have yet to encounter other texts which specifically consider landscape in the context of the *objet a* of desire.
[165] Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 79.

psychoanalytically adequate to the acceptance of the impossibility of recovery from an unmediated relation to land; a glorious rejection of the hope for meaning made unmistakable.

Within this restless place, one can find a means to agitate the movements of unsettling operations accountable to new forms of understanding. It is from this point of territorial and affective estrangement that one can attend to Bhabha's task for the critic, to "attempt to fully realize, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present,"[166] and in doing so expose a willingness to embrace a liminal space as patient and intricate as background scenery.

[166] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 18.

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